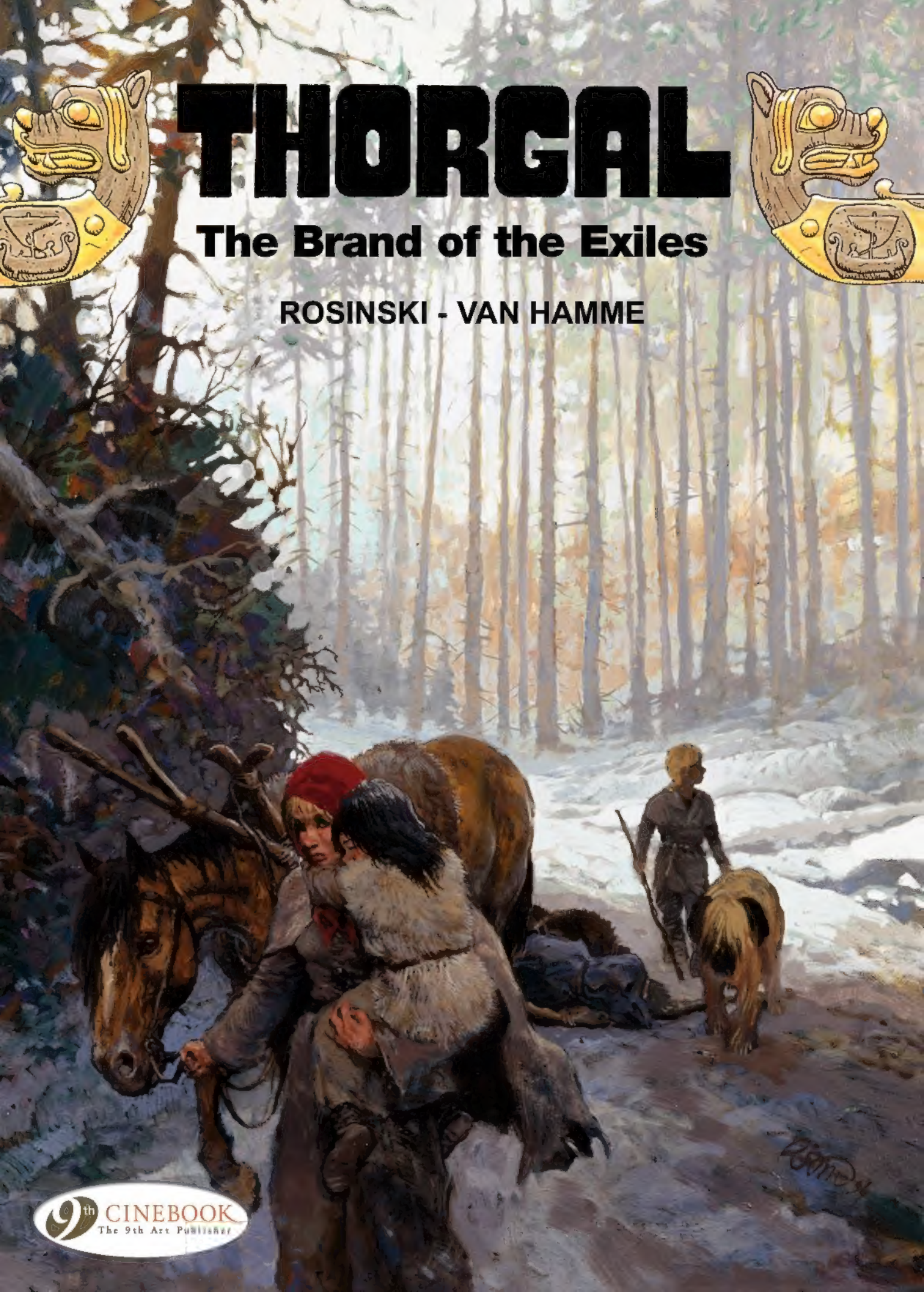




THORGAL

The Brand of the Exiles

ROSINSKI - VAN HAMME



ROSINSKI-VAN HAMME

THORGAL

The Brand of the Exiles



Colour work: GRAZA



I'M SCARED, VIGRID. WHAT WILL WE DO IF OUR MEN DON'T COME BACK? WHO WILL FEED US DURING THE WINTER? WHO WILL PROTECT US FROM RAIDERS AND THE MOUNTAIN TRIBES?

CALM DOWN, ERNHILD. MAYBE THEY JUST WENT A BIT FURTHER THAN THEY HAD INTENDED.

THORGAL OFTEN TOLD ME THAT AS LONG AS ALL THEY CARE ABOUT IS RAIDING AND SENSELESS KILLING, THE VIKINGS WILL NEVER BE A GREAT PEOPLE.

AARICIA, NO...

UNLESS THEY CAME ACROSS THAT DEMON OF THE SEA WE'VE BEEN HEARING ABOUT LATELY. THAT SHAIGAN—THEY SAY HE PILLAGES AND SLAUGHTERS WITHOUT MERCY...

AND WHAT ELSE DO WE DO, IF NOT PILLAGE AND SLAUGHTER WITHOUT MERCY?

IS IT REALLY YOU, GANDALF THE MAD'S DAUGHTER, DARING TO SPEAK THIS?

WHY NOT? ONE CAN BE THE DAUGHTER OF A WARLORD AND STILL BELIEVE IT IS WISER TO BUILD UPON PEACE AT HOME THAN ON FIGHTING ABROAD.

BEWARE, AARICIA! BY SPEAKING IN SUCH A MANNER, YOU DENY THE TEACHINGS OF OUR GODS AND YOU INSULT THE MEMORY OF OUR ANCESTORS. THE VIKINGS ARE THE MASTERS OF THE SEA AND MUST DIE WITH A SWORD IN THEIR HAND IF THEY WANT TO ENTER GREAT ODIN'S VALHALLA.

OH, NO...

I... I CAN'T GO ON. BUT I'M SO CLOSE... IT'S NOT FAIR...

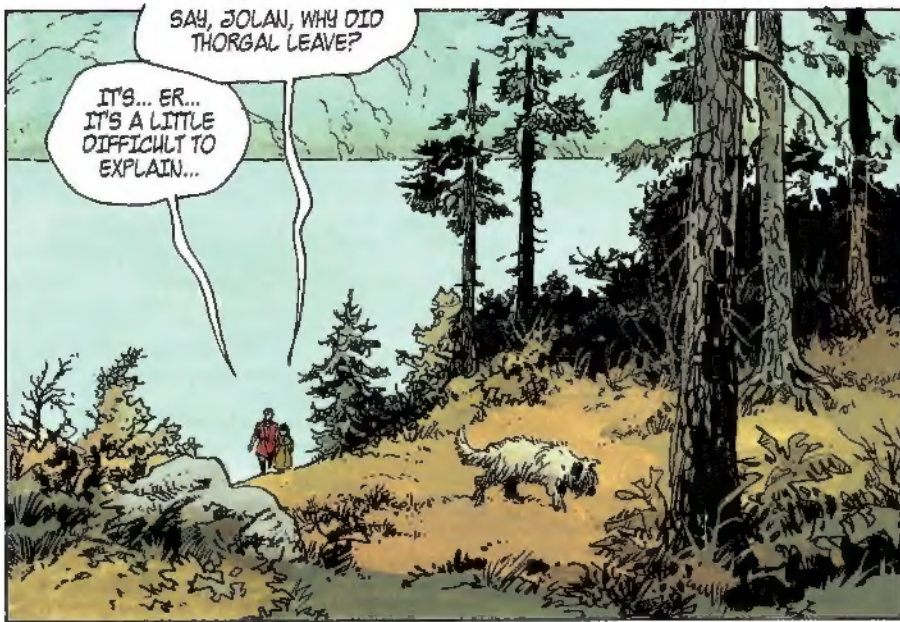
AS FOR YOUR THORGAL, MY LOVELY, ALL HIS PRETTY WORDS DIDN'T STOP HIM FROM ABANDONING YOU ALMOST THREE YEARS AGO. THE TRUTH IS, HE WAS NEVER REALLY ONE OF US. NO DOUBT HE WAS TOO MUCH OF A COWARD TO ACT LIKE A TRUE VIKING.



WHATEVER MAY HAVE HAPPENED TO OUR HUSBANDS AND OUR SONS, AT LEAST WE CAN SPEAK OF THEM WITHOUT SHAME OR ANGER.

YOU HAD BETTER GO HOME, AARICIA. WE ARE ALL A LITTLE ON EDGE TONIGHT.





SAY, JOLAN, WHY DID THORGAL LEAVE?

IT'S... ER... IT'S A LITTLE DIFFICULT TO EXPLAIN...



WHAT'S IT TO YOU, ANYWAY? YOU DON'T EVEN KNOW HIM.

HE'S MY FATHER. AARICIA TOLD ME. SO, I WANT HIM TO COME BACK.



ALL THE OTHER CHILDREN HAVE FATHERS. WHEN THEIR FATHERS GO AWAY, THEY ALWAYS COME BACK WITH NICE PRESENTS AND PRETTY JEWELS. I WISH THORGAL WOULD COME BACK WITH PRESENTS TOO.



AND AARICIA WISHES HE'D COME BACK AS WELL. SHE TOLD ME. SO, WHY ISN'T HE COMING BACK?

OF COURSE NOT. HE'S VERY NICE.

IS HE MEAN?

WHY DID HE LEAVE, THEN?



I... I DON'T KNOW, WOLFCUB. STOP ASKING QUESTIONS. I WISH THORGAL WOULD COME BACK TOO.



ARE YOU CRYING? WHY ARE YOU CRYING?



I'M NOT CRYING. COME ON, LET'S GO PLAY OUR GAME.

YAY! I LIKE WHEN YOU MAKE THINGS DISAPPEAR.



BUT, REMEMBER, WOLFCUB: IT'S A SECRET. AARICIA DOESN'T WANT THE GROWNUPS TO KNOW I CAN DO THAT. DO YOU SWEAR?

I SWEAR.



ALL RIGHT. WHAT DO YOU WANT ME TO MAKE DISAPPEAR?

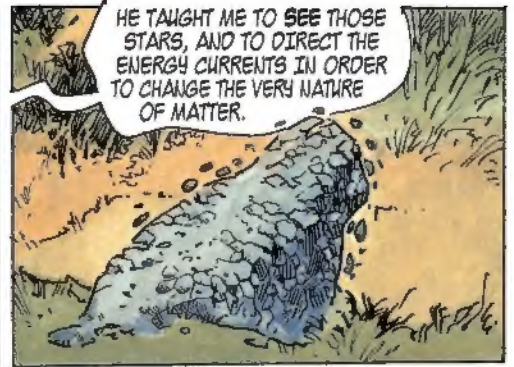
HOW ABOUT THIS STICK HERE?



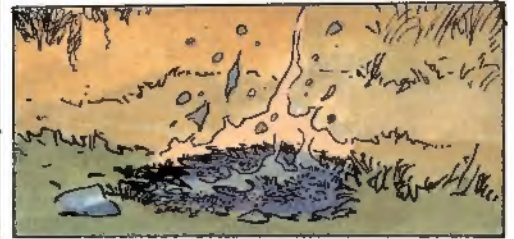
NO, THAT'S TOO EASY. THAT BIG ROCK, OVER THERE... SIT DOWN, WOLFCUB.



IT WAS TANATLOC*, THORGAL'S FATHER, WHO TAUGHT ME THAT ALL THINGS AND BEINGS IN THE UNIVERSE ARE MADE OF MILLIONS OF TINY STARS LINKED TOGETHER BY ENERGY CURRENTS.



HE TAUGHT ME TO SEE THOSE STARS, AND TO DIRECT THE ENERGY CURRENTS IN ORDER TO CHANGE THE VERY NATURE OF MATTER.



MAKING THINGS DISAPPEAR IS EASY FOR ME NOW. WHAT I HAVE TO MASTER...



... IS RECREATING THEM OR TRANSFORMING THEM. I CAN'T DO THAT YET.



WOOF



WOOF WOOF

WOLFCUB?



WOLFCUB, WHERE ARE YOU? AARICIA TOLD US NOT TO GO TOO FAR FROM THE VILLAGE. WOLFCUB?...



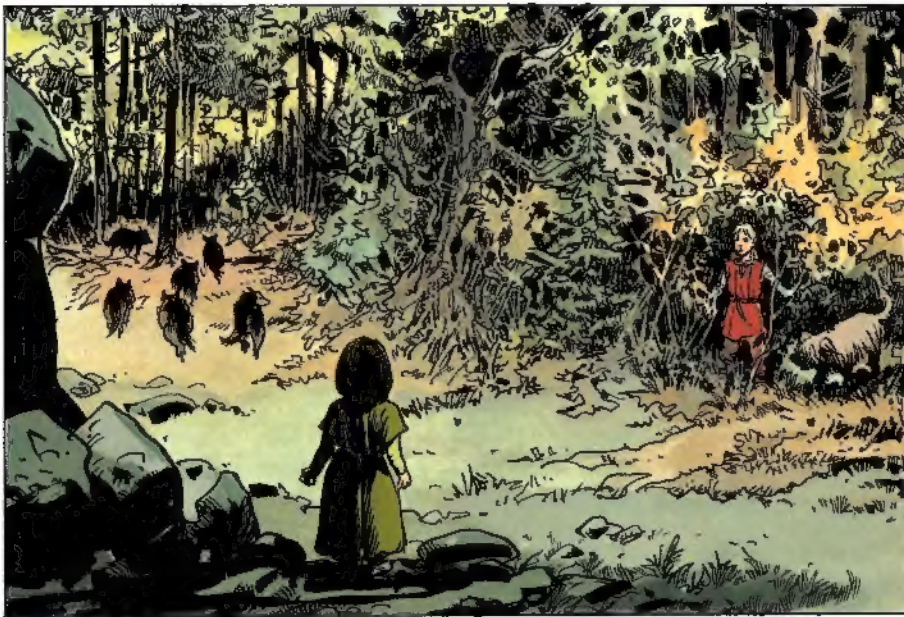
WHAT IS IT, MUFF? EASY, BOY...

GRR GRRR



!!!

*SEE THE LAND OF QA.





THAT'S ERIK! THAT'S MY SON!
WHAT HAPPENED TO HIM!? WHERE
ARE HIS FATHER AND BROTHER!?
WHERE ARE THE OTHERS!?

HE'LL TELL US ONCE
HE COMES TO. STEP
ASIDE, VIGRID. WE'RE
BRINGING HIM TO
THE LONGHOUSE.



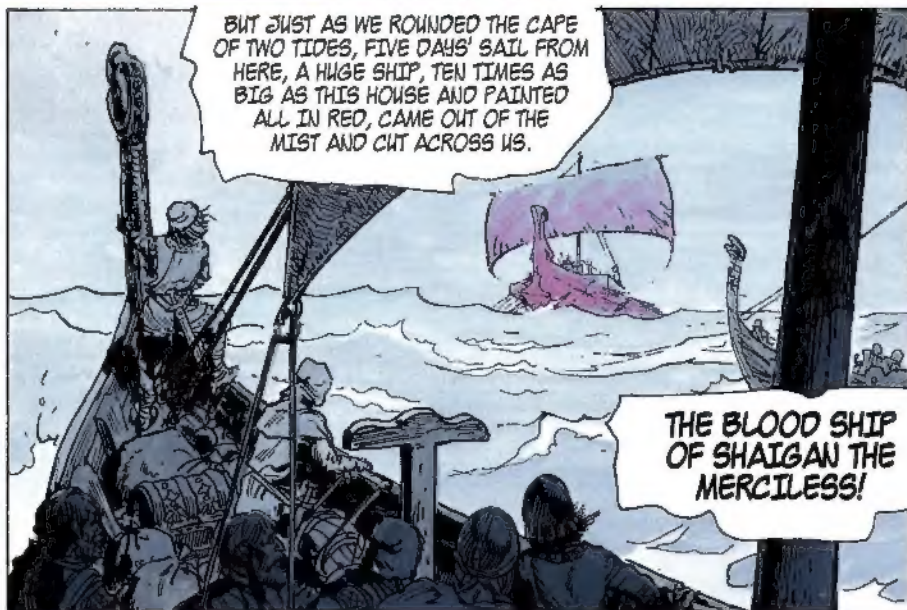
YOU KNOW, I'M THE ONE
WHO FOUND HIM. SOME
WOLVES WERE ATTACK-
ING HIM, BUT I TOLD
THEM TO GO AWAY.



COME IN, EVERYONE. ERIK
HAS REGAINED CONSCIOUS-
NESS! HE'S GOING TO TELL
US WHAT HAPPENED.



OUR FOUR DRAKKARS WERE LADEN
WITH GOLD AND PLUNDER TAKEN
FROM THE SAXONS. OUR LOSSES
HAD BEEN LIGHT, AND OUR HEARTS
WERE FILLED WITH PRIDE AT THE
THOUGHT OF COMING HOME
WITH SUCH RICHES...



BUT JUST AS WE ROUNDED THE CAPE
OF TWO TIDES, FIVE DAYS' SAIL FROM
HERE, A HUGE SHIP, TEN TIMES AS
BIG AS THIS HOUSE AND PAINTED
ALL IN RED, CAME OUT OF THE
MIST AND CUT ACROSS US.

THE BLOOD SHIP
OF SHAIGAN THE
MERCILESS!



WITH ITS THREE
BANKS OF OARS, IT
WAS TOO TALL FOR US TO
BOARD AND TOO FAST
FOR US TO ESCAPE.



WITH SKILFUL MANOEUVRING,
IT MANAGED TO SEPARATE OUR
DRAKKARS AND ATTACK EACH
OF THEM SEPARATELY. WE
NEVER HAD A CHANCE TO
MOUNT A PROPER DEFENCE.

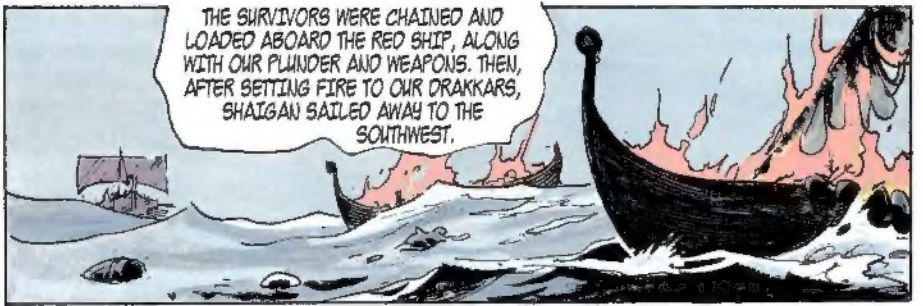


SHAIGAN HIMSELF WAS
AT THE HELM. ALL OF US
WERE THUNDERSTRUCK WHEN
WE RECOGNISED HIM...

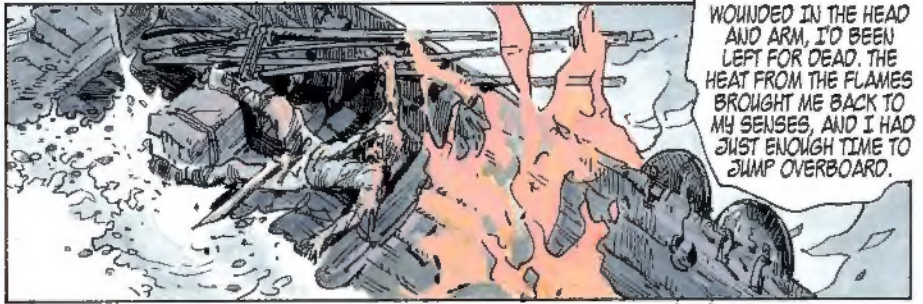
ONE BY ONE, WE WERE OVERWHELMED BY HORDES OF PIRATES, AND MANY OF US DIED HOLDING OUR SWORDS. SO DID MY FATHER AND OLDER BROTHER, WHO PERISHED SCREAMING ODIN'S NAME AT THEIR ENEMIES.



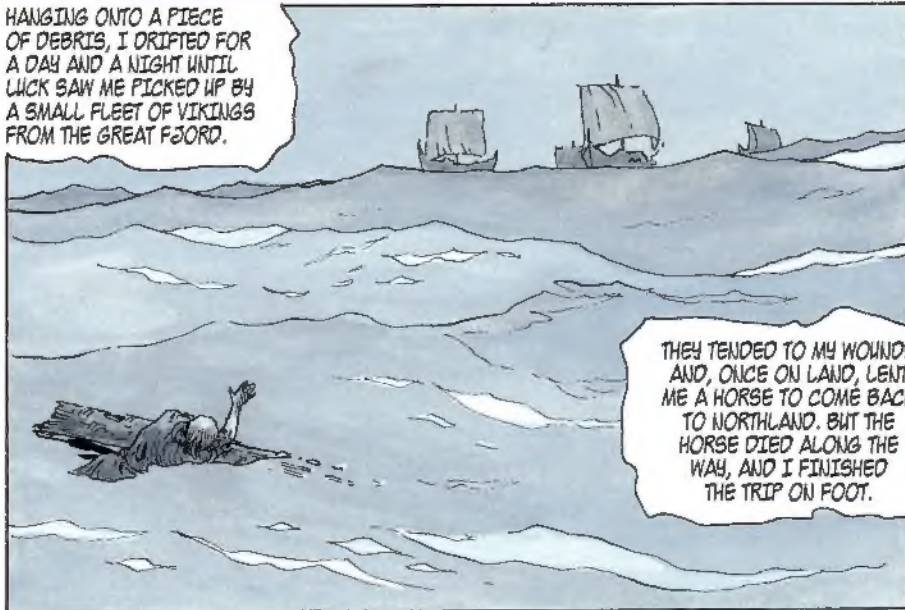
THE SURVIVORS WERE CHAINED AND LOADED ABOARD THE RED SHIP, ALONG WITH OUR PLUNDER AND WEAPONS. THEN, AFTER SETTING FIRE TO OUR DRAKKARS, SHAIGAN SAILED AWAY TO THE SOUTHWEST.



WOUNDED IN THE HEAD AND ARM, I'D BEEN LEFT FOR DEAD. THE HEAT FROM THE FLAMES BROUGHT ME BACK TO MY SENSES, AND I HAD JUST ENOUGH TIME TO JUMP OVERBOARD.



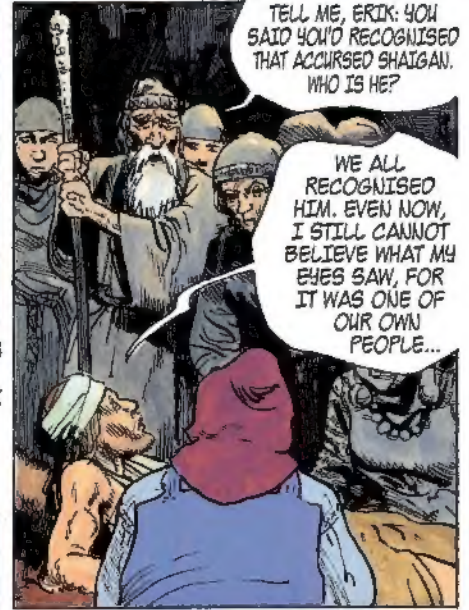
HANGING ONTO A PIECE OF DEBRIS, I DRIFTED FOR A DAY AND A NIGHT UNTIL LUCK SAW ME PICKED UP BY A SMALL FLEET OF VIKINGS FROM THE GREAT FJORD.



THEY TENDED TO MY WOUNDS AND, ONCE ON LAND, LENT ME A HORSE TO COME BACK TO NORTHLAND. BUT THE HORSE DIED ALONG THE WAY, AND I FINISHED THE TRIP ON FOOT.

TELL ME, ERIK: YOU SAID YOU'D RECOGNISED THAT ACCURSED SHAIGAN. WHO IS HE?

WE ALL RECOGNISED HIM. EVEN NOW, I STILL CANNOT BELIEVE WHAT MY EYES SAW, FOR IT WAS ONE OF OUR OWN PEOPLE...



IT WAS THORGAL AEGIRSSON.





BUT, THAT'S... THAT'S RIDICULOUS. THORGAL WOULD NEVER...

THAT BASTARD WAS NEVER ONE OF US...

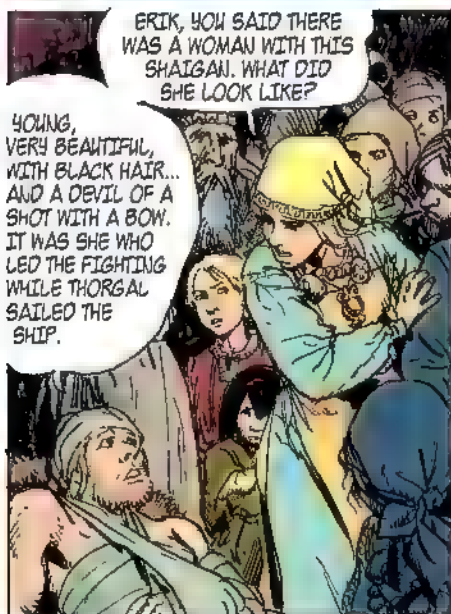
HE'S ALWAYS DESPISED US...

NOW HE WANTS TO DESTROY US.



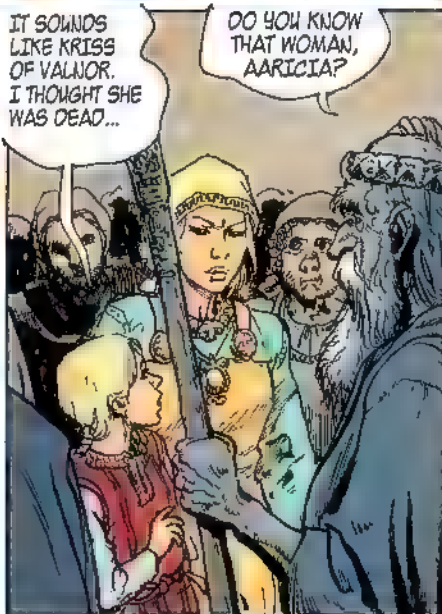
THIS IS WHY YOUR HANDSOME THORGAL ABANDONED YOU, YOU SILLY GIRL... HE CHOSE TO BECOME A PIRATE FOR HIS OWN BENEFIT RATHER THAN RAID ALONG WITH THE CLAN WHO'D CARED FOR HIM. MAY THOR'S LIGHTNING COOK HIS WORTHLESS GUTS!

THAT'S... THAT'S IMPOSSIBLE! ERIK MUST BE MISTAKEN



ERIK, YOU SAID THERE WAS A WOMAN WITH THIS SHAIGAN. WHAT DID SHE LOOK LIKE?

YOUNG, VERY BEAUTIFUL, WITH BLACK HAIR... AND A DEVIL OF A SHOT WITH A BOW. IT WAS SHE WHO LED THE FIGHTING WHILE THORGAL SAILED THE SHIP.



IT SOUNDS LIKE KRISS OF VALNOR. I THOUGHT SHE WAS DEAD...

DO YOU KNOW THAT WOMAN, AARICIA?

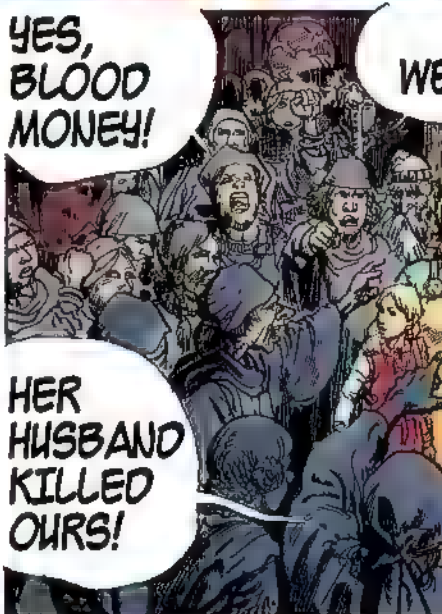


I... YES, WELL... IF IT IS SHE...

SHE'S A BAD WOMAN! SHE FORCED US TO GO WITH HER TO THE LAND OF QA, ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE SEA*.



WERGILD!



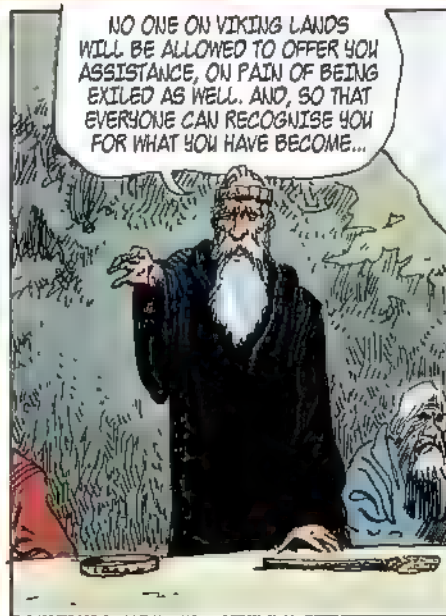
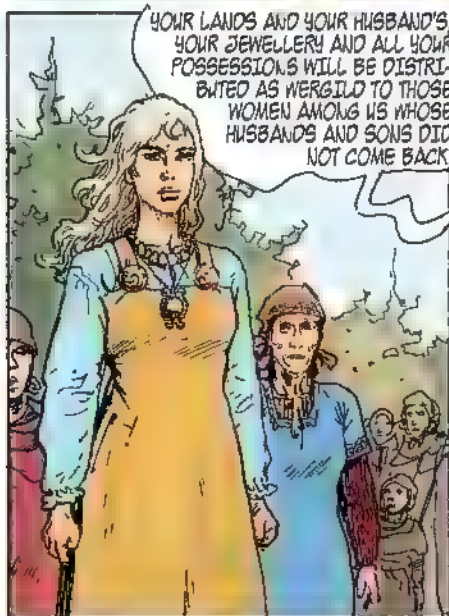
YES, BLOOD MONEY!

THE WERGILD!

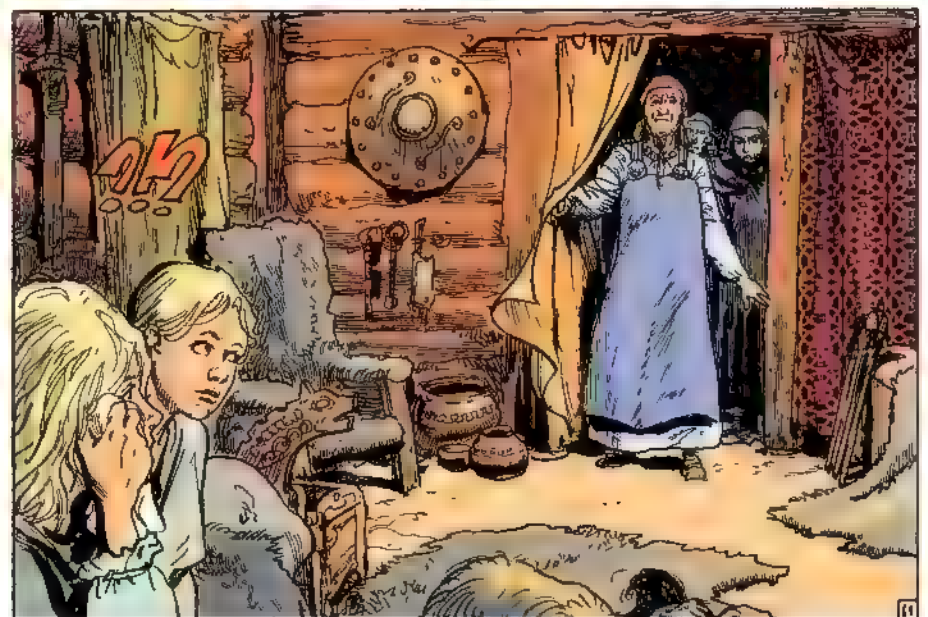
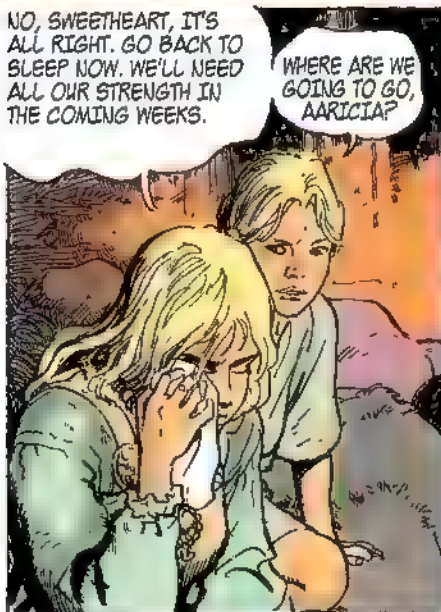
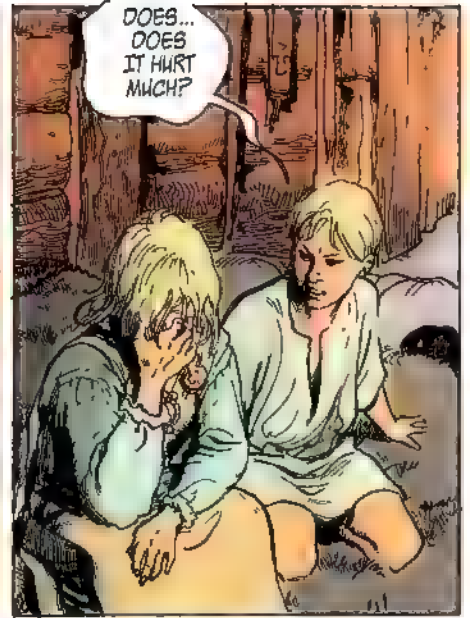
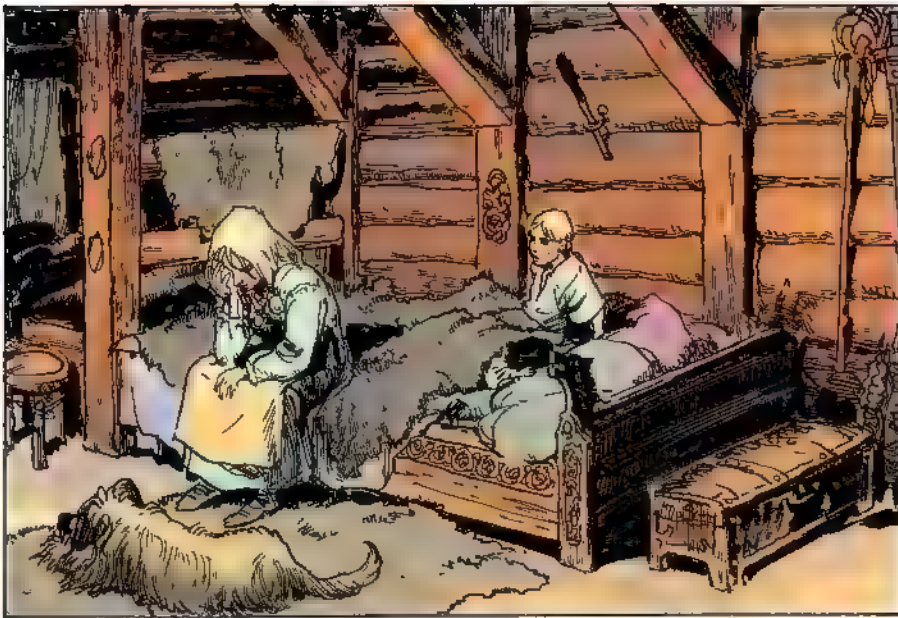
WE WANT OUR BLOOD MONEY!

HER HUSBAND KILLED OURS!

*SEE THE LAND OF QA.



*GOVERNING AND JUDICIAL ASSEMBLY OF EACH VIKING CLAN



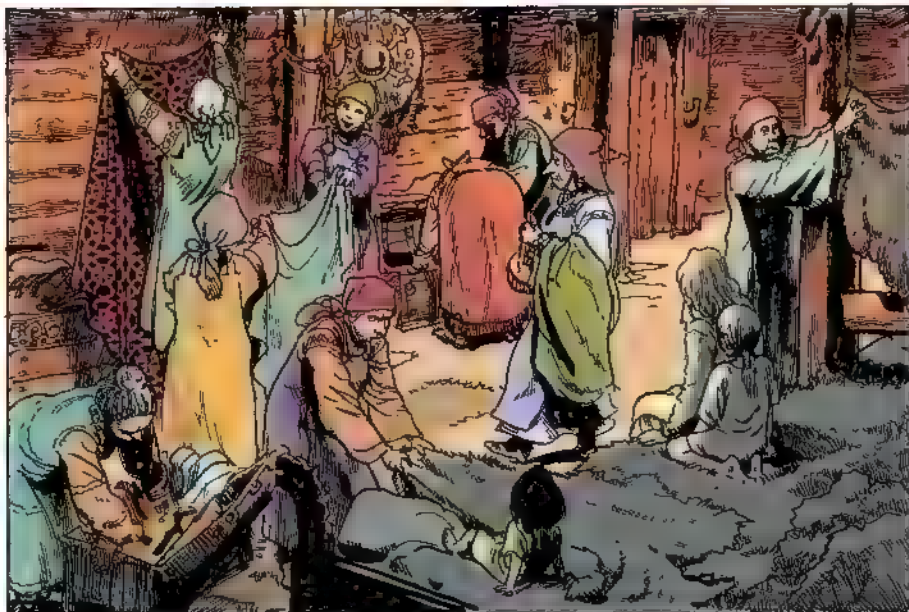
WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE? YOU HAVE NO RIGHT! I'M NOT SUPPOSED TO LEAVE THE VILLAGE UNTIL DAWN.

SO, WE SHOULD GIVE YOU TIME TO HIDE YOUR GOLD AND JEWELS? I DON'T THINK SO, MY PRETTY!

AND, FOR STARTERS, GIVE ME THAT! IT'LL BARELY BE ENOUGH TO PAY ME BACK FOR THE LOSS OF A HUSBAND AND SON.

OW!

GO ON, ALL OF YOU! EMPTY THE CHESTS; SEARCH THE COFFERS. MAKE THAT WENCH GIVE US BACK ALL THAT HER THIEF OF A FATHER STOLE FROM US WHEN HE CALLED HIMSELF OUR KING!

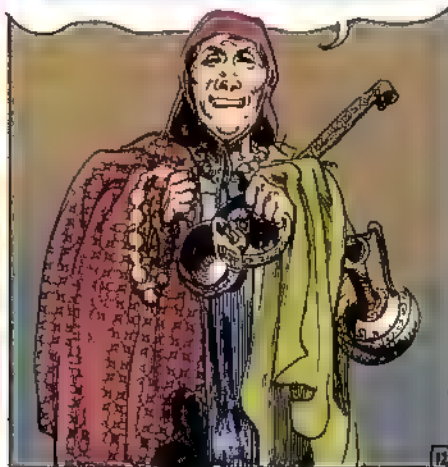


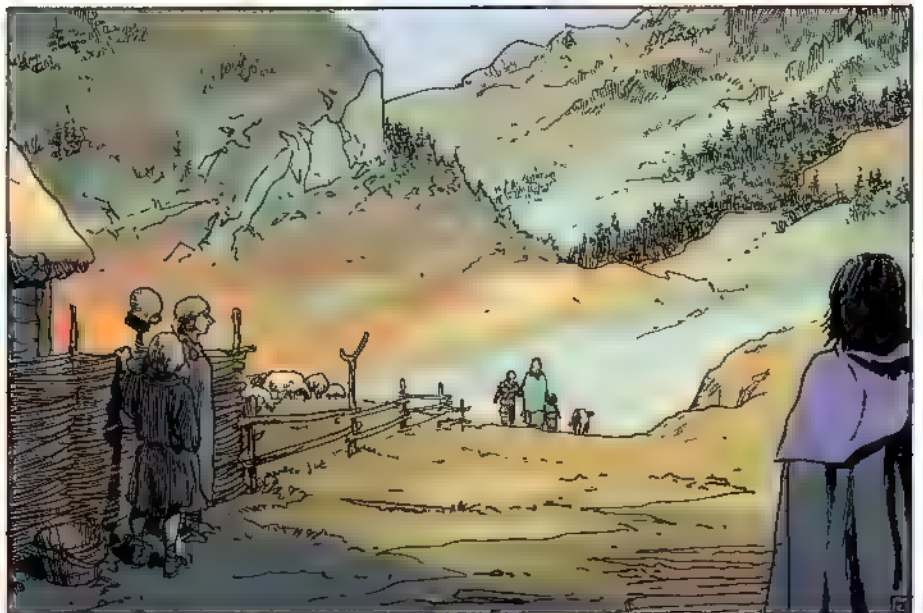
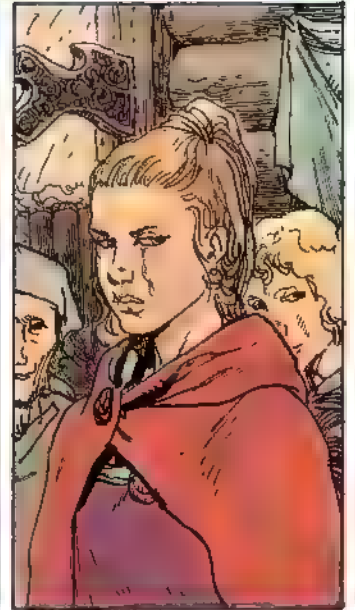
EVIL HAGS! I'M GOING TO...

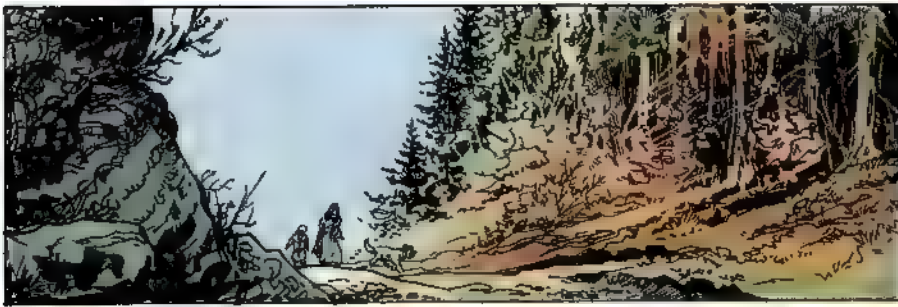
NO, JOLAN!

WELL, "PRINCESS"? NOT SO HIGH AND MIGHTY ANYMORE, ARE YOU? YOU'RE NOTHING, NOW! YOU'RE LESS THAN THE POOREST OF BEGGARS, LESS THAN THE MANGIEST OF DOGS! FARE THEE WELL, "PRINCESS"! I CHERISH THE THOUGHT THAT YOUR CORPSE WILL SOON FEED THE CROWS!

I KNOW WHAT YOU ARE CAPABLE OF, BUT WE CANNOT DO ANYTHING TO THEM. IF YOU HURT THEM, ALL THREE OF US WILL BE KILLED.







THEN WE'LL FIND ROOTS, PINE NUTS, ACORNS... AND WE'LL TRY TO CATCH A RABBIT...

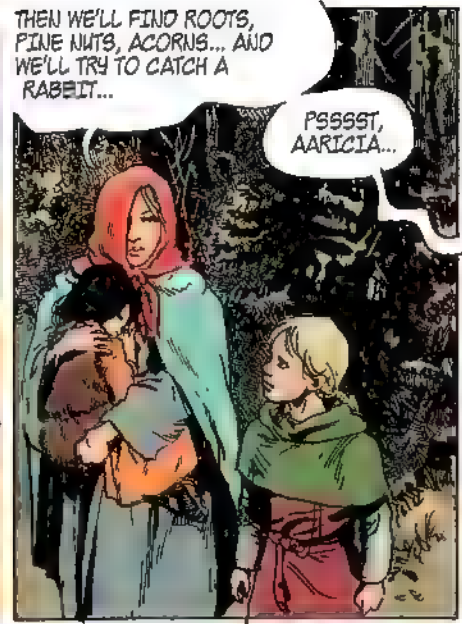
PSSST, AARICIA...



MAMA, I'M HUNGRY.

WE'LL STOP SOON, SWEETHEART, AND WE'LL GATHER SOME FRUITS AND WILD BERRIES.

THERE AREN'T ANY BERRIES ANYMORE, AARICIA. IT'S THE BEGINNING OF WINTER.

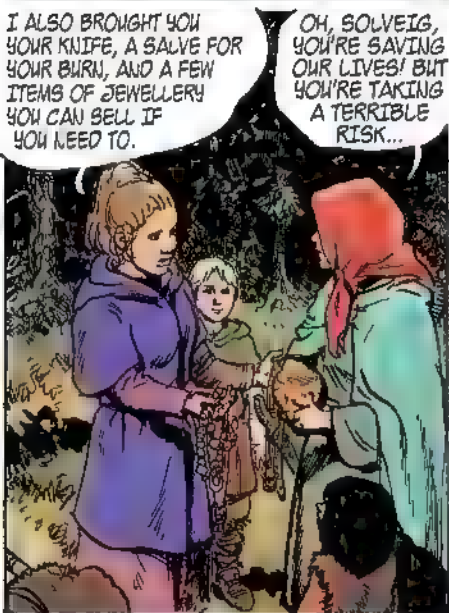


SOLVEIG?! ARE YOU CRAZY? WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?

NO ONE SAW ME LEAVE THE VILLAGE. I WAS VERY CAREFUL. COME THIS WAY.



I BROUGHT YOU THIS HORSE AND SLED WITH SOME FURS AND FOOD FOR THREE WEEKS. DON'T WORRY... IT'S ALL MINE. NO ONE WILL KNOW I GAVE IT TO YOU. ONCE YOU REACH THE GREAT FJORD, YOU CAN EXCHANGE THE HORSE FOR A BOAT.



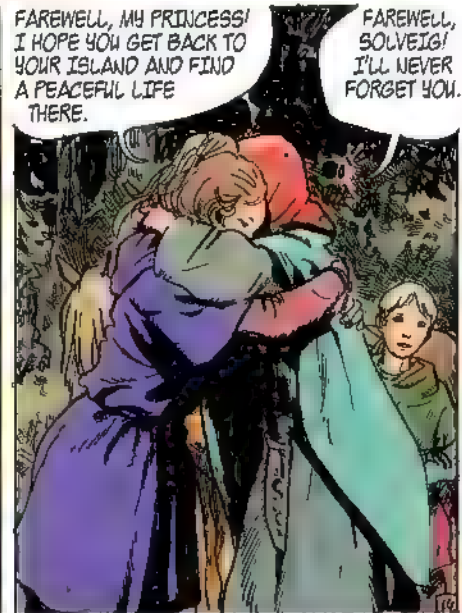
I ALSO BROUGHT YOU YOUR KNIFE, A SALVE FOR YOUR BURN, AND A FEW ITEMS OF JEWELLERY YOU CAN SELL IF YOU NEED TO.

OH, SOLVEIG, YOU'RE SAVING OUR LIVES! BUT YOU'RE TAKING A TERRIBLE RISK...



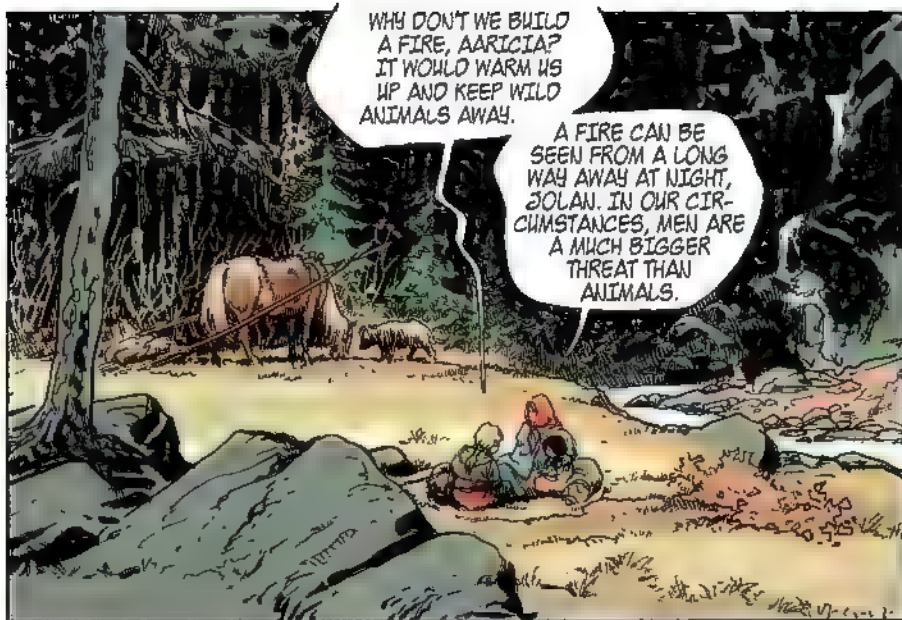
IF ANYONE DISCOVERS WHAT YOU DID, YOU'LL BE EXILED TOO.

WOULDN'T YOU HAVE DONE THE SAME THING? YOU'RE MY ONLY FRIEND, AARICIA. IF I COULD, I'D LEAVE WITH YOU.



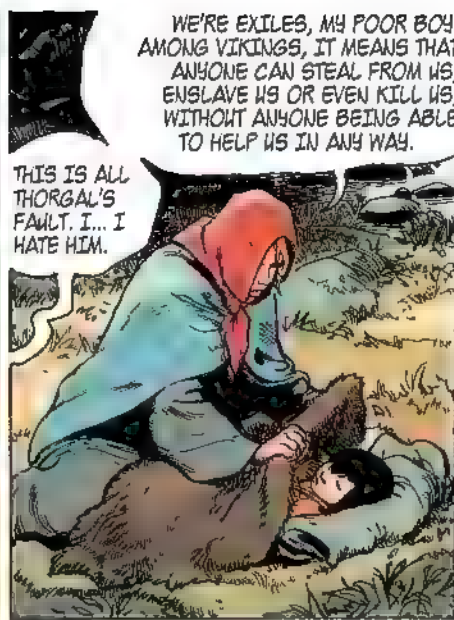
FAREWELL, MY PRINCESS! I HOPE YOU GET BACK TO YOUR ISLAND AND FIND A PEACEFUL LIFE THERE.

FAREWELL, SOLVEIG! I'LL NEVER FORGET YOU.



WHY DON'T WE BUILD A FIRE, AARICIA? IT WOULD WARM US UP AND KEEP WILD ANIMALS AWAY.

A FIRE CAN BE SEEN FROM A LONG WAY AWAY AT NIGHT, JOLAN. IN OUR CIRCUMSTANCES, MEN ARE A MUCH BIGGER THREAT THAN ANIMALS.



WE'RE EXILES, MY POOR BOY. AMONG VIKINGS, IT MEANS THAT ANYONE CAN STEAL FROM US, ENSLAVE US OR EVEN KILL US, WITHOUT ANYONE BEING ABLE TO HELP US IN ANY WAY.

THIS IS ALL THORGAL'S FAULT. I... I HATE HIM.



YOU HATE HIM TOO, DON'T YOU?

NO, I DON'T HATE HIM. I'M JUST TRYING TO UNDERSTAND.

OH, THAT'S EASY...



THORGAL LEFT TO GO LIVE WITH ANOTHER WOMAN SEVERAL MEN IN THE VILLAGE HAVE DONE THE SAME. AND KRISS OF VALNOR CONVINCED HIM TO BECOME A PIRATE WITH HER, THAT'S ALL.

IS THAT REALLY ALL?...

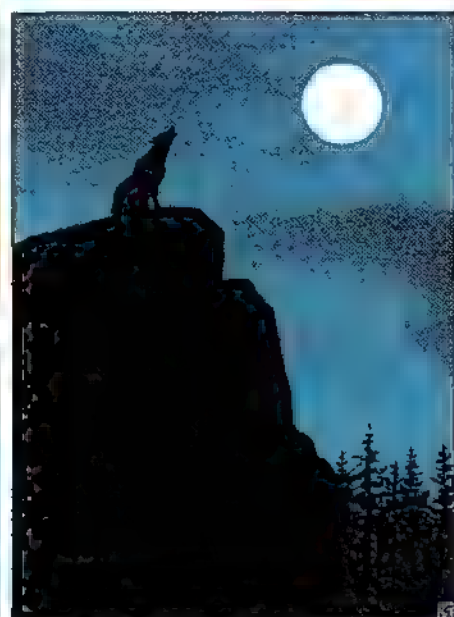
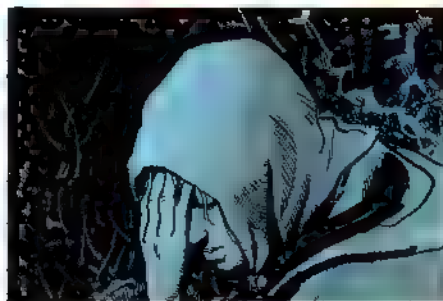


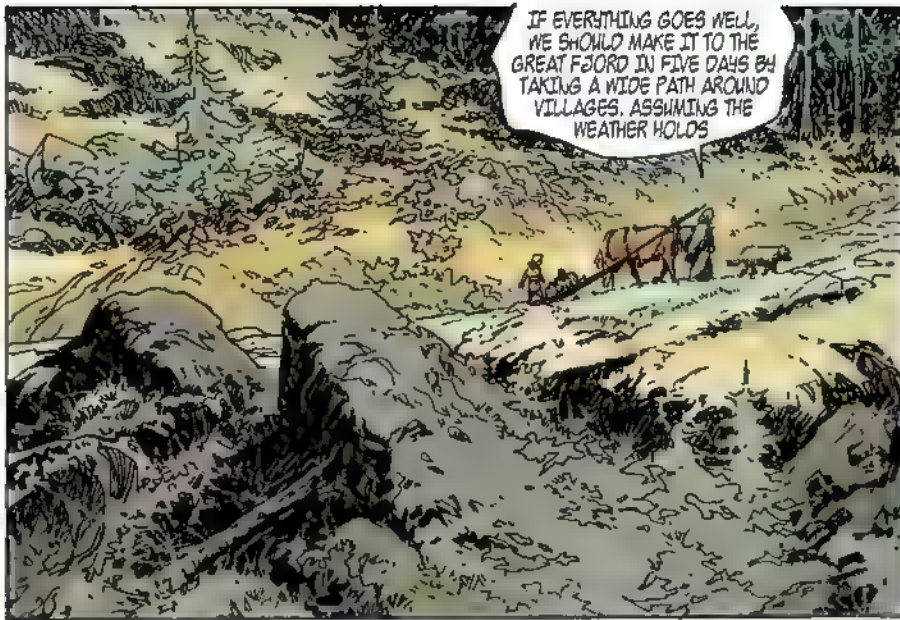
YOU'RE FORGETTING THAT THORGAL ONLY EVER WANTED TO FIGHT TO DEFEND HIS LIFE AND OURS. HE HATED GRATUITOUS VIOLENCE. AND, ABOVE ALL... HE LOVED US.

WELL, HE DOESN'T LOVE US ANYMORE. HE EVEN CHANGED HIS NAME, AND BECAUSE OF HIM WE WERE DRIVEN OUT OF THE VILLAGE AND THEY PUT THAT... THAT MARK ON YOUR CHEEK. I HATE HIM!

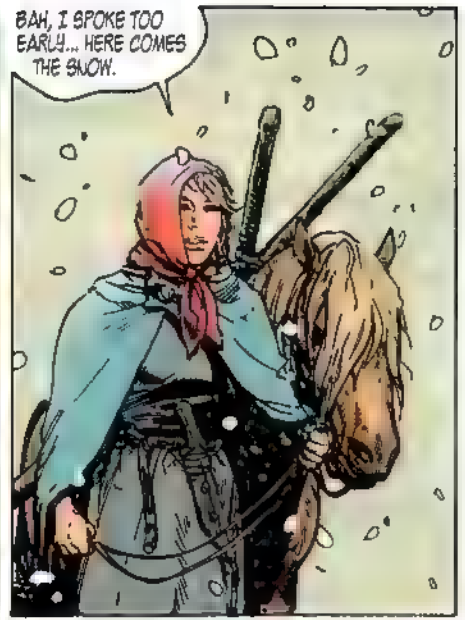


CALM DOWN, SWEETHEART. WE'RE NOT EVEN SURE IT WAS REALLY HE. IT'S LIKELY THAT SHAGAN SIMPLY LOOKS LIKE HIM. GO TO SLEEP NOW. WE'LL LEAVE VERY EARLY TOMORROW

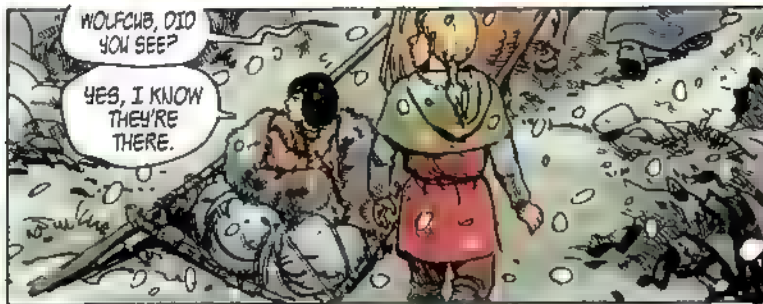
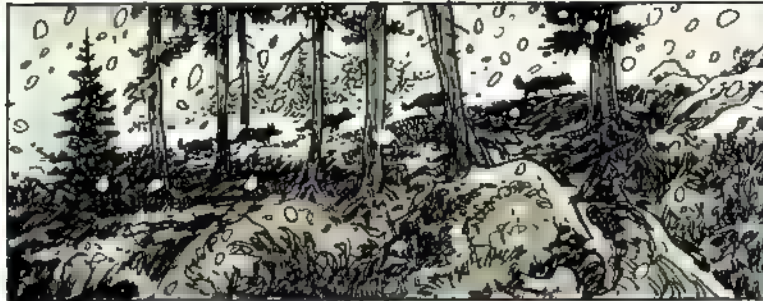




IF EVERYTHING GOES WELL,
WE SHOULD MAKE IT TO THE
GREAT FJORD IN FIVE DAYS BY
TAKING A WIDE PATH AROUND
VILLAGES, ASSUMING THE
WEATHER HOLDS



BAH, I SPOKE TOO
EARLY... HERE COMES
THE SNOW.

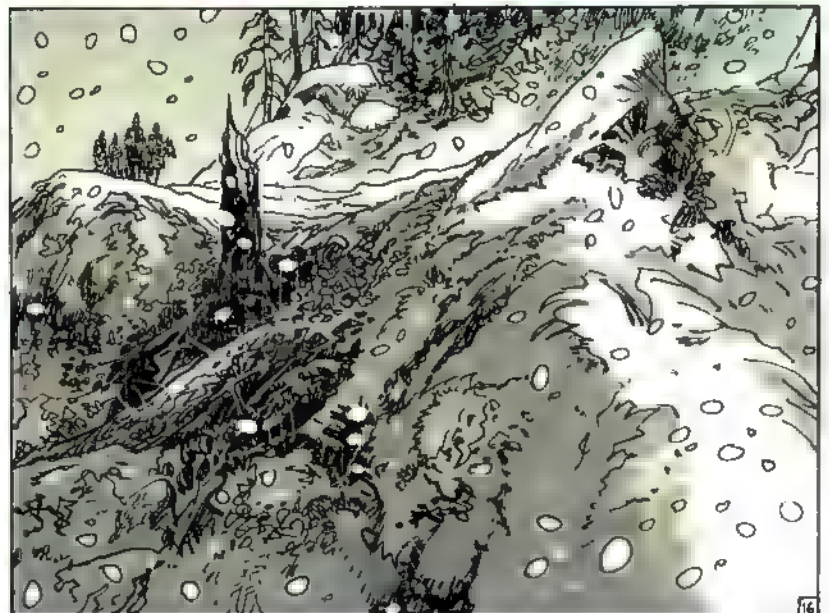


WOLFENB, DID
YOU SEE?

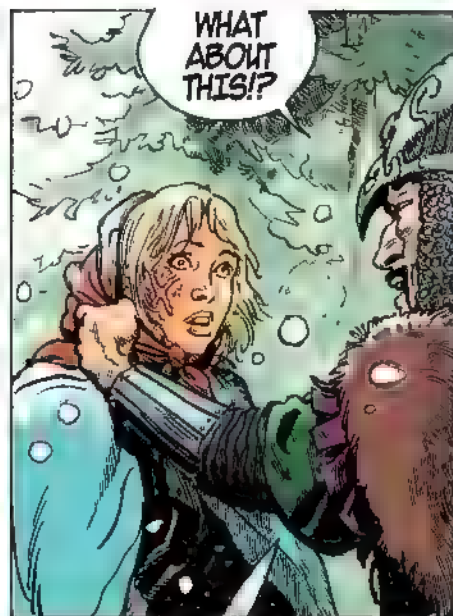
YES, I KNOW
THEY'RE
THERE.

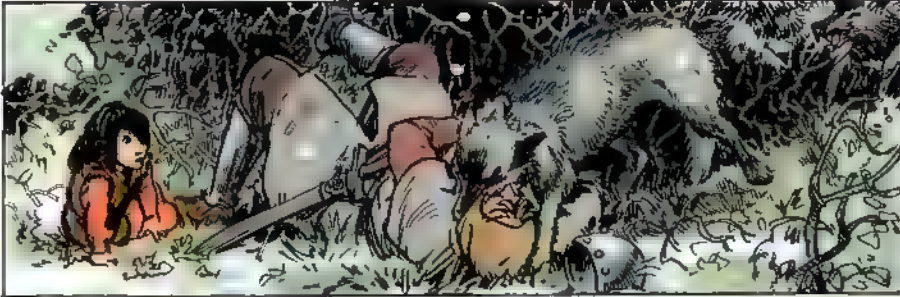
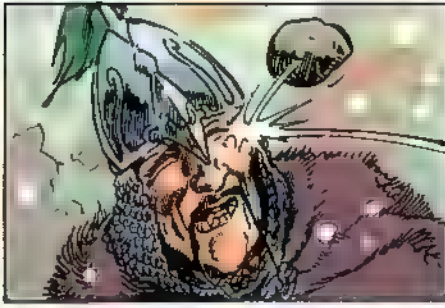
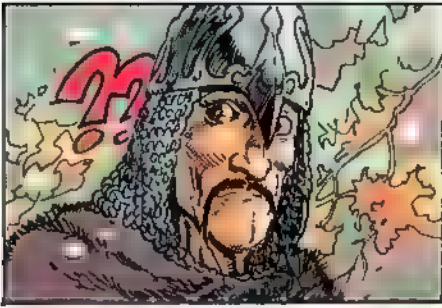


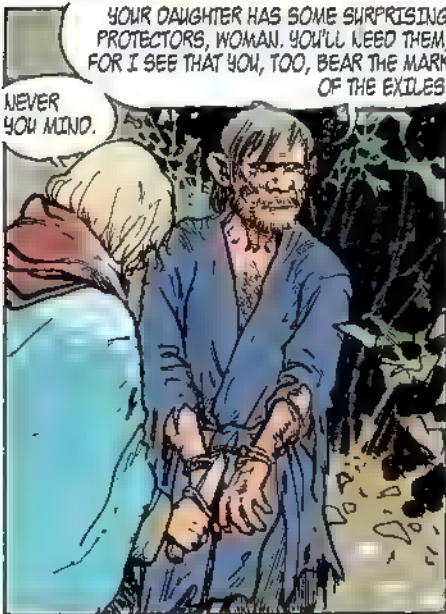
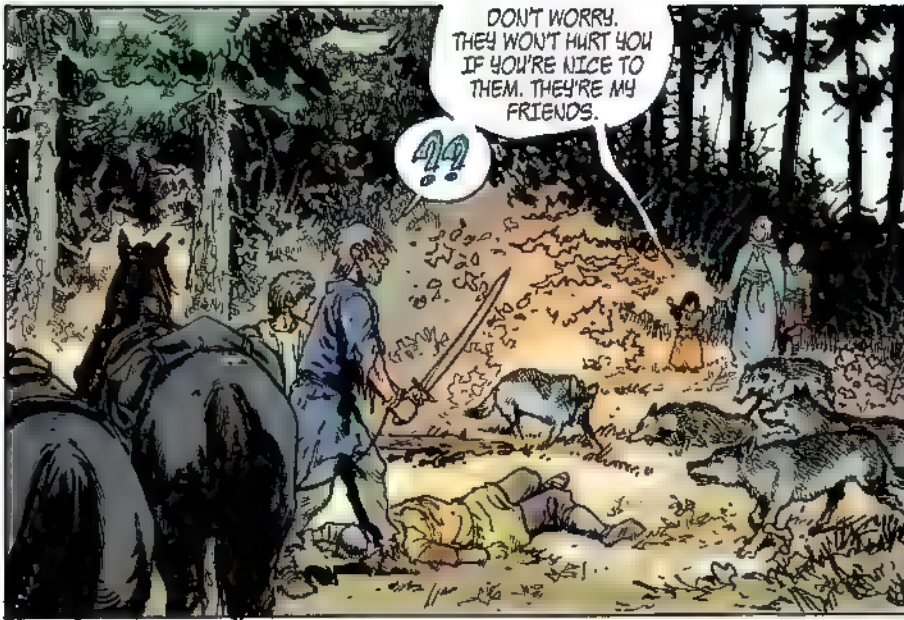
QUICK, LET'S
HIDE!









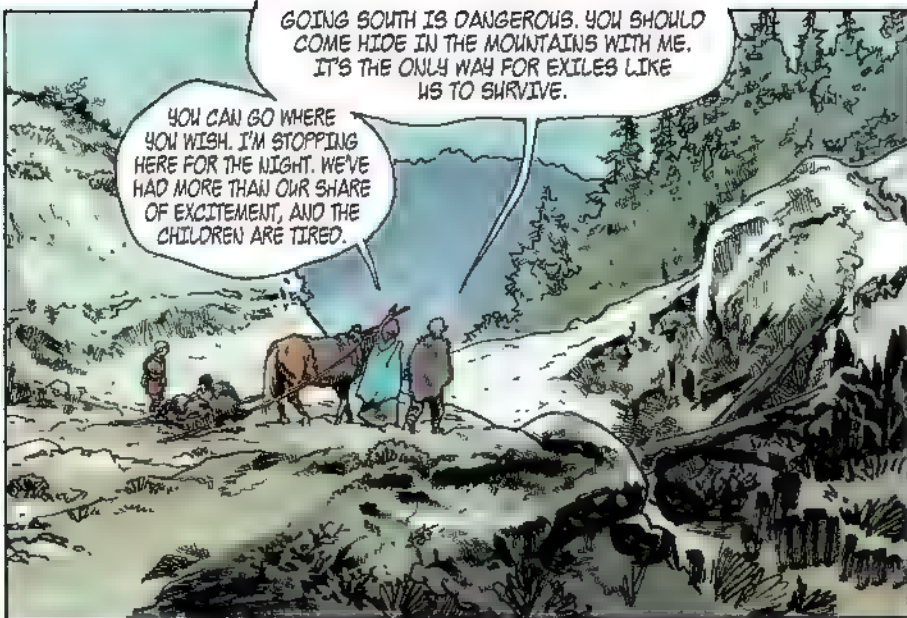


THE MAN WHO ESCAPED IS CALLED ARKADES. HE WORKS FOR A BIG SLAVER OF THE GREAT FJORD, A BYZANTINE WHO BUYS PRISONERS OR CAPTURES EXILES TO SELL THEM BEYOND THE SEA.



GOING SOUTH IS DANGEROUS. YOU SHOULD COME HIDE IN THE MOUNTAINS WITH ME. IT'S THE ONLY WAY FOR EXILES LIKE US TO SURVIVE.

YOU CAN GO WHERE YOU WISH. I'M STOPPING HERE FOR THE NIGHT. WE'VE HAD MORE THAN OUR SHARE OF EXCITEMENT, AND THE CHILDREN ARE TIRED.



HOW'S YOUR DOG?

HE'S GOT A DEEP CUT ON HIS SIDE, BUT IT DIDN'T GO PAST THE MUSCLE.



MY PARENTS WERE KILLED TWO YEARS AGO. THAT ONE... I DON'T EVEN KNOW HIS NAME. HE WAS ALREADY THEIR PRISONER WHEN THEY CAPTURED ME.



MY NAME'S DAREK. WHAT'S YOURS?

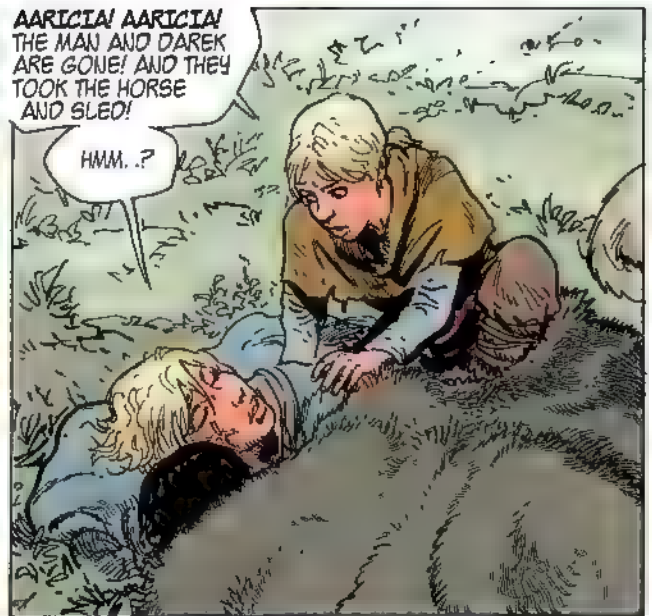
JOLAN. IS THAT MAN YOUR FATHER?



I DON'T LIKE THAT MAN, AARICIA. HE LOOKS LIKE A BANDIT, AND HE ATE HALF THE FOOD WE HAD LEFT.

SHHH... TOMORROW, HE'LL GO HIS OWN WAY. SLEEP, SWEETHEART.





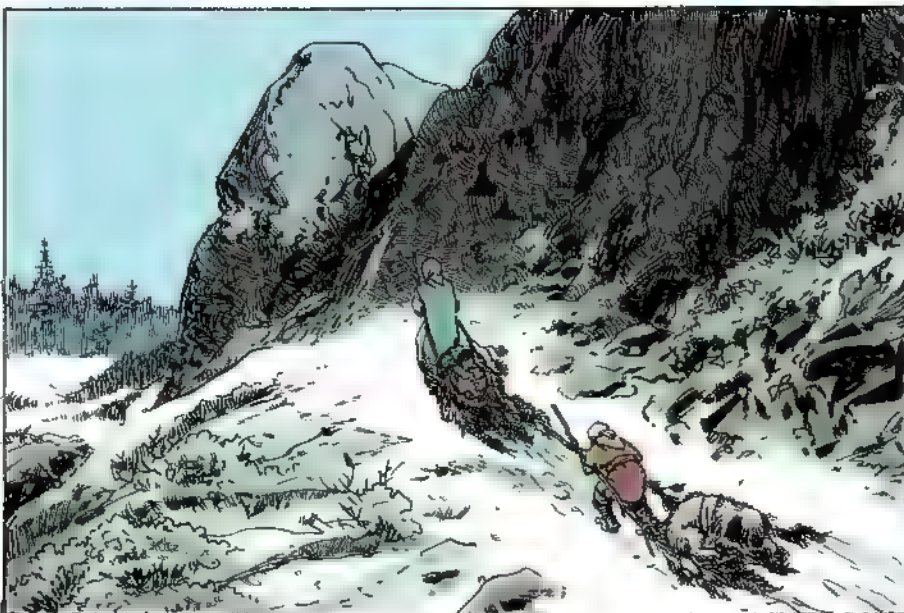
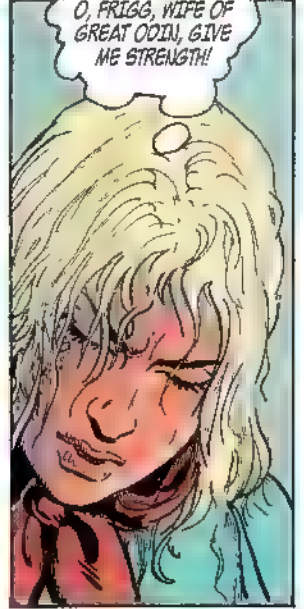
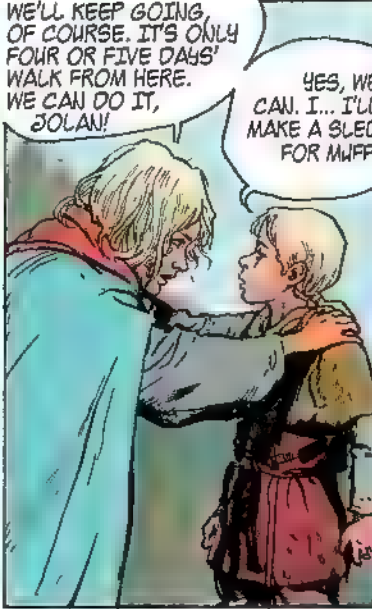
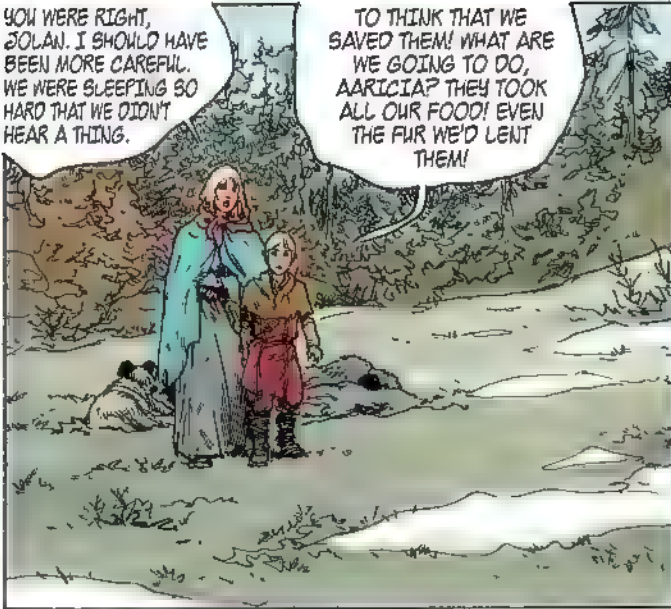
YOU WERE RIGHT,
JOLAN. I SHOULD HAVE
BEEN MORE CAREFUL.
WE WERE SLEEPING SO
HARD THAT WE DIDN'T
HEAR A THING.

TO THINK THAT WE
SAVED THEM! WHAT ARE
WE GOING TO DO,
AARICIA? THEY TOOK
ALL OUR FOOD! EVEN
THE FUR WE'D LENT
THEM!

WE'LL KEEP GOING,
OF COURSE. IT'S ONLY
FOUR OR FIVE DAYS'
WALK FROM HERE.
WE CAN DO IT,
JOLAN!

YES, WE
CAN. I... I'LL
MAKE A SLED
FOR MUFF.

O, FRIGG, WIFE OF
GREAT ODIN, GIVE
ME STRENGTH!





A WOMAN AND TWO CHILDREN. IT'LL BE EASY.

NO.



LOOK AT THOSE WOLVES... THEY'RE NOT ATTACKING. IT LOOKS LIKE THEY'RE PROTECTING THEM.

WHAT MAGIC IS THIS?...

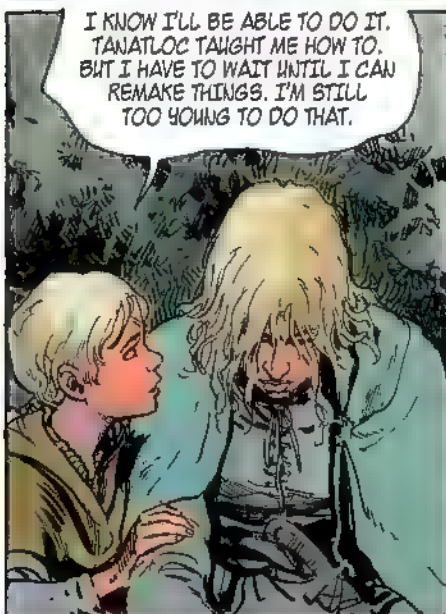


I DON'T KNOW, BUT I DON'T WANT TO RISK THE WRATH OF THE WOLF-GOD. BESIDES, THAT WOMAN CAN'T HAVE MUCH WORTH STEALING.

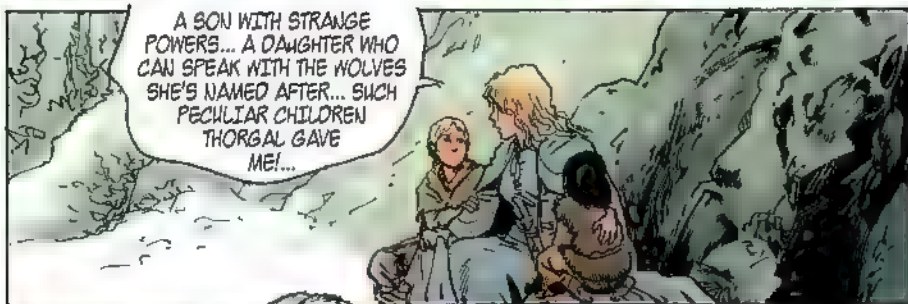


DON'T LOOK AT ME LIKE THAT, SOLAN. THIS HORRIBLE MARK...

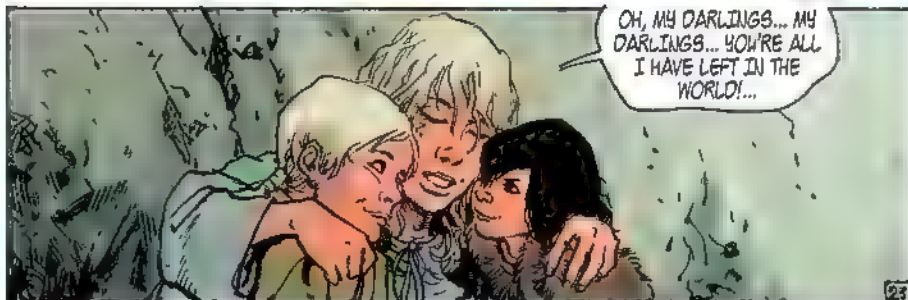
LATER, WHEN I'M OLDER, I'LL MAKE IT DISAPPEAR.



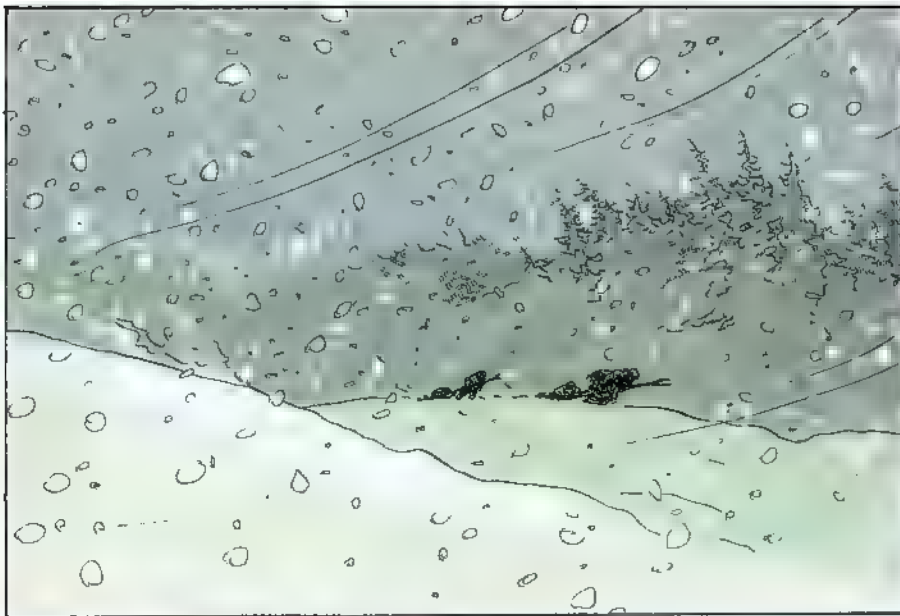
I KNOW I'LL BE ABLE TO DO IT. TANATLOC TAUGHT ME HOW TO. BUT I HAVE TO WAIT UNTIL I CAN REMAKE THINGS. I'M STILL TOO YOUNG TO DO THAT.



A SON WITH STRANGE POWERS... A DAUGHTER WHO CAN SPEAK WITH THE WOLVES SHE'S NAMED AFTER... SUCH PECULIAR CHILDREN THORGAL GAVE ME!...



OH, MY DARLINGS... MY DARLINGS... YOU'RE ALL I HAVE LEFT IN THE WORLD!...



AH, IT SEEMS
TO BE ABATING
AT LAST...



MAMA,
LOOK!



THE WOLVES...
THEY'RE
GOING!

IF THEY'RE
LEAVING US, IT
CAN MEAN ONLY
ONE THING...



THE GREAT
SOUTHERN
FJORD!



WHAT DO YOU WANT, KID?

I... I'D LIKE TO BUY A BOAT.



IS THAT SO? AREN'T YOU A LITTLE YOUNG TO GO OUT TO SEA?

IT'S... IT'S FOR MY FATHER. HE'S SICK, AND HE TOLD ME TO COME HERE IN HIS STEAD TO FIND A BOAT SO WE CAN KEEP TRAVELLING.

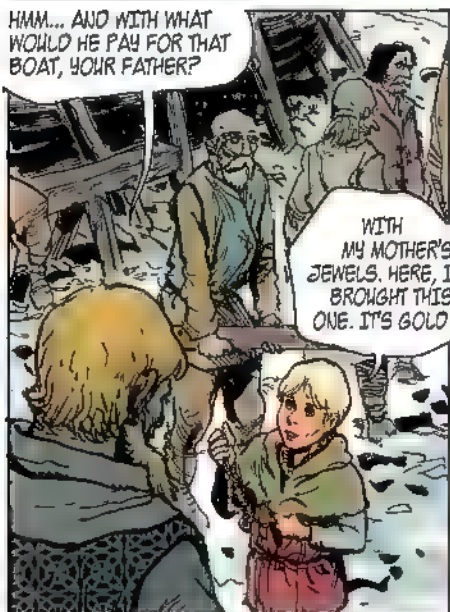


HMM... AND WITH WHAT WOULD HE PAY FOR THAT BOAT, YOUR FATHER?

YEAH, NOT BAD. BUT OUR WOMEN HAVE ENOUGH JEWELLERY AS IT IS, MY BOY. AND WE NEED OUR BOATS TO GO FISHING.

YOU SHOULD ORDER ONE FROM THE CARPENTER INSTEAD. WITH ANY LUCK, YOU'LL HAVE IT IN TWO OR THREE MONTHS—WHEN THE FJORD'S ICEBOWN! HAI HAI HAI

WITH MY MOTHER'S JEWELS. HERE, I BROUGHT THIS ONE. IT'S GOLD

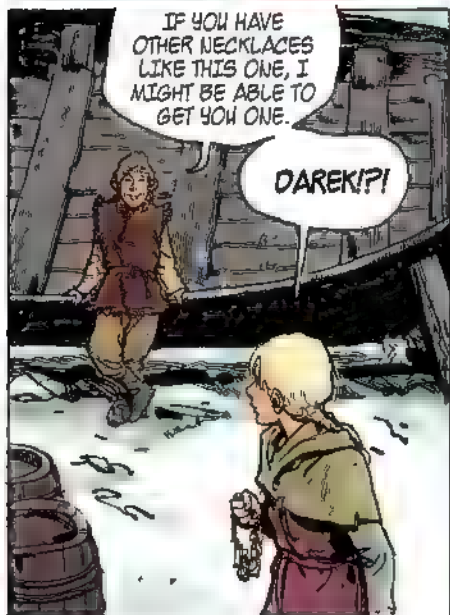


PSSTT... JOLAN... ARE YOU LOOKING FOR A BOAT?



IF YOU HAVE OTHER NECKLACES LIKE THIS ONE, I MIGHT BE ABLE TO GET YOU ONE.

DAREKI?!



MAMA, I'M SO HUNGRY...

JOLAN WILL SOON BE BACK WITH SOME FOOD, SWEETHEART. AT LEAST, I HOPE SO.





THIEVES! SCAMPS!
MY CHICKENS! COME
BACK HERE!

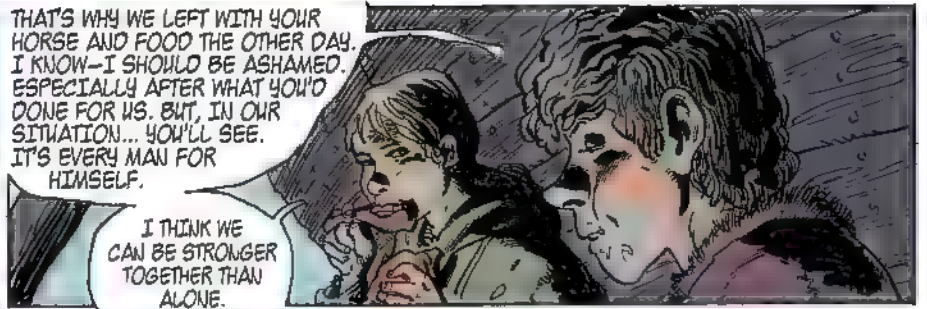
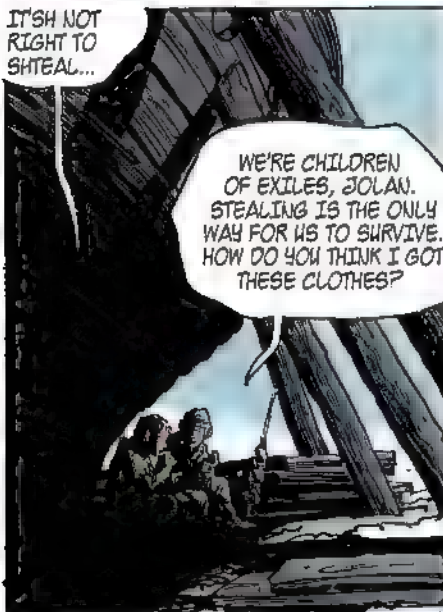


IT'SH NOT
RIGHT TO
SHTEAL...

WE'RE CHILDREN
OF EXILES, JOLAN.
STEALING IS THE ONLY
WAY FOR US TO SURVIVE.
HOW DO YOU THINK I GOT
THESE CLOTHES?

THAT'S WHY WE LEFT WITH YOUR
HORSE AND FOOD THE OTHER DAY.
I KNOW—I SHOULD BE ASHAMED.
ESPECIALLY AFTER WHAT YOU'D
DONE FOR US. BUT, IN OUR
SITUATION... YOU'LL SEE.
IT'S EVERY MAN FOR
HIMSELF.

I THINK WE
CAN BE STRONGER
TOGETHER THAN
ALONE.



MAYBE. I DON'T KNOW. WE DIDN'T
HELP OURSELVES MUCH BY STEALING
FROM YOU. SHORTLY AFTER WE LEFT YOU,
WE WERE ATTACKED BY MEN FROM A
MOUNTAIN TRIBE WHO WANTED TO TAKE
THE HORSE FROM US. I MANAGED TO
RUN AWAY AND MAKE MY WAY HERE,
THOUGH

WHEN YOU TOLD ME
ABOUT FINDING A BOAT FOR
US, I SUPPOSE YOU INTENDED
TO STEAL IT, TOO?



OF COURSE. HOW ELSE
COULD I GET MY HANDS ON
A BOAT? COME ON... LET'S
BRING THESE CHICKENS TO
YOUR MOTHER AND LITTLE
SISTER. PREFERABLY
WHILE STAYING OUT
OF SIGHT.

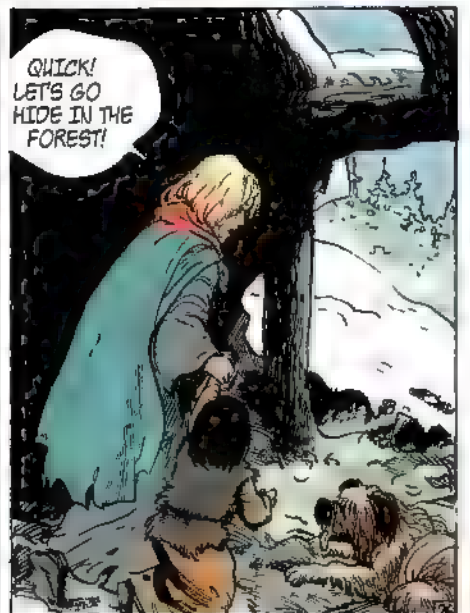


MAMA!
THERE'S A RIDER
APPROACHING!

??



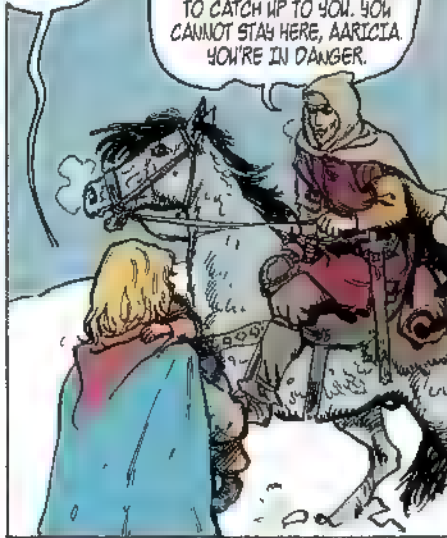
QUICK!
LET'S GO
HIDE IN THE
FOREST!



AARICIA!
WAIT...
IT'S ME,
ERIK...



ERIK!?
BUT,
HOW?...



SOLVEIG TOLD ME YOU
WANTED TO GET TO THE
GREAT FJORD, AND I TRIED
TO CATCH UP TO YOU. YOU
CANNOT STAY HERE, AARICIA.
YOU'RE IN DANGER.

I'M IN
DANGER
EVERYWHERE,
ERIK. THANKS
TO YOU.



I... I'M SO ASHAMED... IT WAS
YOUR CHILDREN WHO SAVED ME
FROM THE WOLVES, AND I... AS
SOON AS I COULD STAND UP,
I TOLD SOLVEIG EVERYTHING
AND JUMPED ON A HORSE TO
FOLLOW YOUR TRAIL AND
COME WARN YOU...

WARN ME OF
WHAT?



I... I LIED,
AARICIA. IN PART,
ANYWAY.

WHEN YOU
SAID THAT SHAGAN
WAS ACTUALLY
THORGAL?

BUT, THAT VERY EVENING, THE BLACK-HAIRED
WOMAN OFFERED ME A DEAL. SHE'D LET ME
GO SO I COULD TELL WHAT I'D SEEN, ON THE
CONDITION THAT I WOULDN'T SAY I'D BEEN
CAPTURED AND SHE'D SPOKEN TO ME. WHY DID
SHE CHOOSE ME? PROBABLY BECAUSE I WAS
THE YOUNGEST OF THE SURVIVORS
AND MY WOUNDS WERE MINOR.



NO, IT REALLY WAS THORGAL.
WE ALL RECOGNISED HIM. I LIED
WHEN I SAID THAT I'D BEEN LEFT
FOR DEAD ON MY BURNING
DRAKKAR. THE TRUTH IS THAT I WAS
TAKEN CAPTIVE LIKE ALL THE
OTHER SURVIVORS.



AT THE TIME, I DIDN'T SEE WHAT
COULD BE WRONG WITH ACCEPTING.
I SWORE, AND SHE HAD ME DROPPED
ON THE COAST A FEW DAYS' WALK
FROM OUR VILLAGE. SO, I WASN'T
PICKED UP BY THE VIKINGS
OF THE GREAT FJORD
LIKE I SAID.



BUT WHY?
TO WHAT END,
ALL OF THAT?

IT SHOULDN'T
BE HARD TO
UNDERSTAND,
MY DEAR...

... BUT IT'LL BE MY PLEASURE
TO EXPLAIN IT TO YOU
PERSONALLY

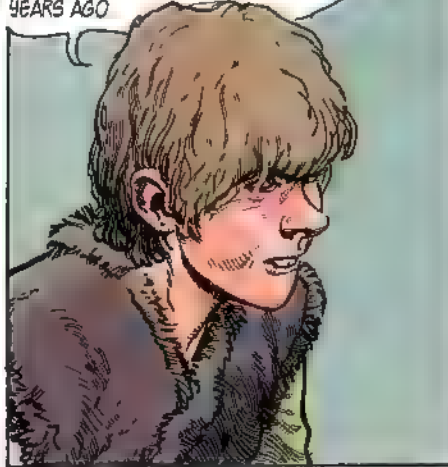


KRISS OF
VALNOR!?!



I'M A SVEAR* FROM THE EASTERN SEA, ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE MOUNTAINS. MY FATHER WAS EXILED FOR KILLING THE SON OF OUR CLAN CHIEF IN A DUEL, AND HE WAS FORCED TO RUN FROM THE LAND WITH MY MOTHER, MY SISTER AND ME.

THE CHIEF SENT SOME MEN AFTER US, AND MY PARENTS WERE MASSACRED WITHOUT HAVING A CHANCE TO DEFEND THEMSELVES. MY FATHER HAD JUST ENOUGH TIME TO HIDE MY SISTER AND ME IN A CAVE BEFORE THEY CAUGHT UP TO HIM. THAT WAS TWO YEARS AGO



SINCE THEN, WE'VE LIVED LIKE WILDERMEN IN THE MOUNTAINS, STEALING WHAT WE NEED FROM VILLAGES. BUT, A FEW WEEKS AGO, MY SISTER WAS CAPTURED BY THE MEN OF THAT ACCURSED BYZANTINE SLAVER.

AND YOU DIDN'T GET CAUGHT?



I'D GONE TO CATCH TROUT IN A NEARBY STREAM. AS YOU SAW, THOUGH, THEY EVENTUALLY GOT ME, TOO. AND, IF IT HADN'T BEEN FOR YOU...

HERE WE ARE. AARICIA?... IT'S ME, JOLAN. I'M WITH DAREK, AND WE BROUGHT SOME FOOD.



AARICIA?... WOLFCUB?... THEY'RE GONE. SOMETHING MUST HAVE HAPPENED...

AND NOT SOMETHING GOOD. LOOK: THE SNOW IS ALL TRAMPLED.



MUFFI WHAT HAPPENED? WHERE ARE AARICIA AND WOLFCUB?



*ANCIENT SWEDES

THAT'S ERIK, THE MAN FROM OUR VILLAGE WHO CAUSED US TO BE EXILED. I DON'T UNDERSTAND...

WHAT I UNDERSTAND IS THAT YOUR MOTHER AND SISTER ARE IN SERIOUS TROUBLE.

MOST LIKELY, THE BYZANTINE'S MEN TRACKED THEM DOWN. THERE'S NOTHING WE CAN DO.

YES, THERE IS! WE CAN GO FREE THEM. AND YOUR SISTER, TOO, WHILE WE'RE AT IT

YOU THINK I NEVER CONSIDERED IT?... IT'S IMPOSSIBLE, JOLAN. THE BYZANTINE HAS A WHOLE GANG OF HIS COUNTRYMEN WITH HIM, WHILE THERE ARE JUST TWO OF US—TWO CHILDREN WITH ONLY A CHICKEN-SPIT FOR A WEAPON.

WHERE'S YOUR BYZANTINE HIDING?

IN A STONE KEEP HALF A DAY'S WALK FROM HERE. A REAL FORTRESS. HE KEEPS HIS SLAVES THERE UNTIL HE CAN SHIP THEM OUT IN THE SPRING. IT'S HOPELESS, JOLAN.

LET'S GO!

HERE WE ARE. BE CAREFUL—THERE'RE BOUND TO BE SOME SENTRIES.

I'M TELLING YOU THERE'S NO POINT.

WE'LL SEE WHEN WE GET THERE.





WHAT? ...
THOSE MEN ARE
VIKINGS?!

VIKINGS OF
THE NORTH,
YES.

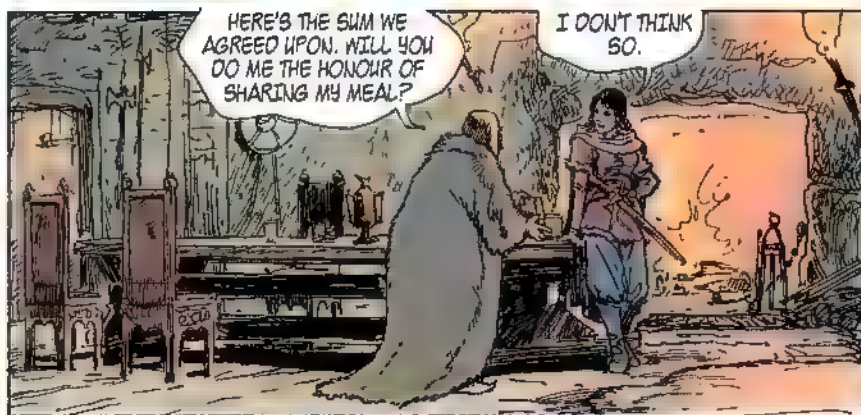


THEY'LL MAKE STRONG SLAVES THAT YOU'LL
BE ABLE TO SELL FOR A HIGH PRICE
IN YOUR COUNTRY.

THAT'S... THAT'S
MADNESS!! WE'RE
IN VIKING LAND
HERE! IF THE PEOPLE
OF THE GREAT
FJORD WERE TO
HEAR OF IT...

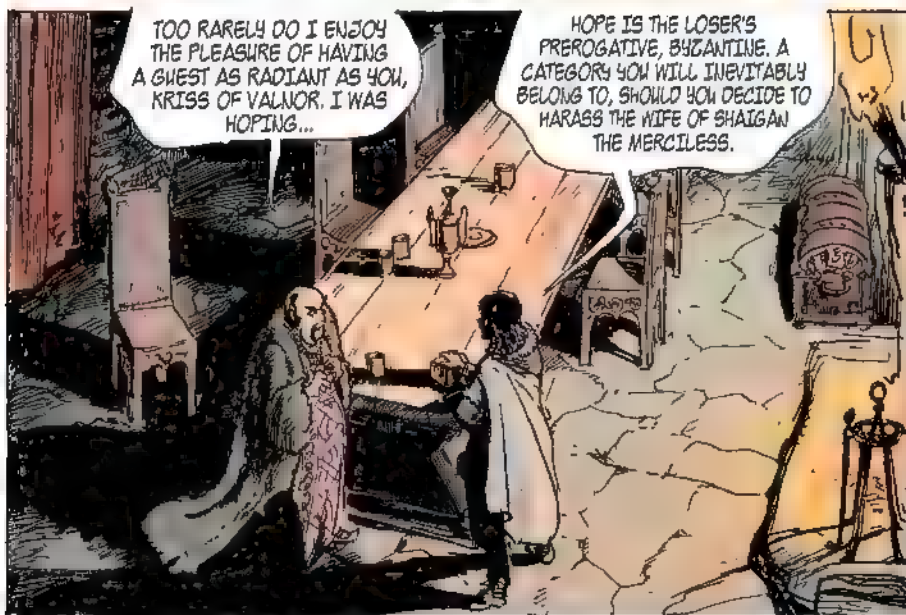


WHY SHOULD THEY?
ALL YOU HAVE TO DO
IS MAKE SURE THAT
NONE OF YOUR PRISO-
NERS ESCAPES. WHY
DON'T WE SETTLE
OUR BUSINESS
NOW?...



HERE'S THE SUM WE
AGREED UPON. WILL YOU
DO ME THE HONOUR OF
SHARING MY MEAL?

I DON'T THINK
SO.

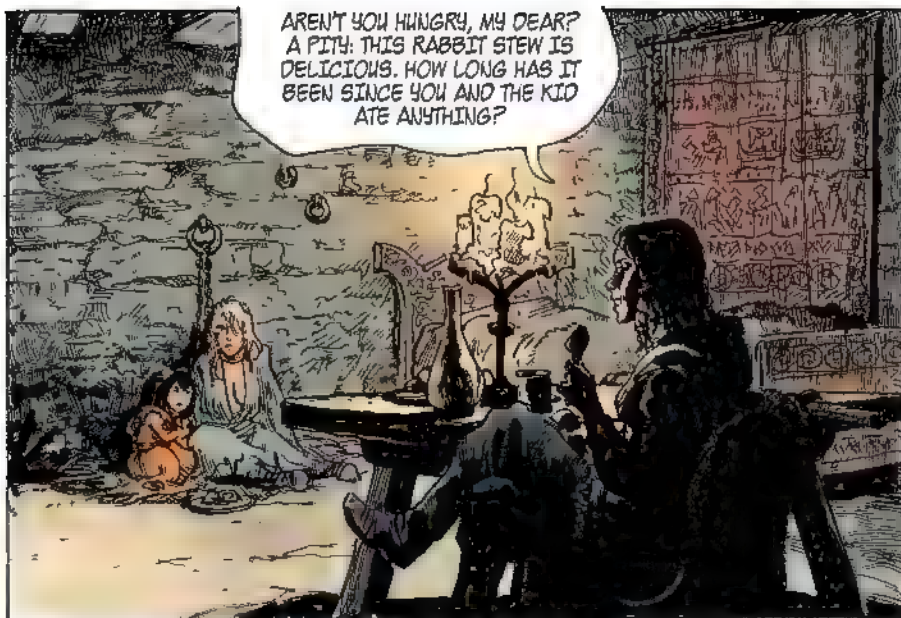


TOO RARELY DO I ENJOY
THE PLEASURE OF HAVING
A GUEST AS RADIANT AS YOU,
KRISS OF VALNOR. I WAS
HOPING...

HOPE IS THE LOSER'S
PREROGATIVE, BYZANTINE. A
CATEGORY YOU WILL INEVITABLY
BELONG TO, SHOULD YOU DECIDE TO
HARASS THE WIFE OF SHAIGAN
THE MERCILESS.



YOU WILL HAVE FOOD
FOR TWO BROUGHT
TO MY ROOM. I WILL
SAIL AT DAWN WITH
MY PRISONER.



AREN'T YOU HUNGRY, MY DEAR?
A PITY: THIS RABBIT STEW IS
DELICIOUS. HOW LONG HAS IT
BEEN SINCE YOU AND THE KID
ATE ANYTHING?



I'M TELLING YOU
TO EAT! I WANT
YOU HEALTHY AND
STRONG TO
SERVE ME.



YOU ACCURSED
WITCH! YOU'LL
PAY FOR
ALL YOUR
CRIMES!



AND WHO WILL MAKE ME
PAY FOR THEM, YOU FOOL?
NOT YOUR BELOVED
THORGAL, THAT'S
FOR CERTAIN...

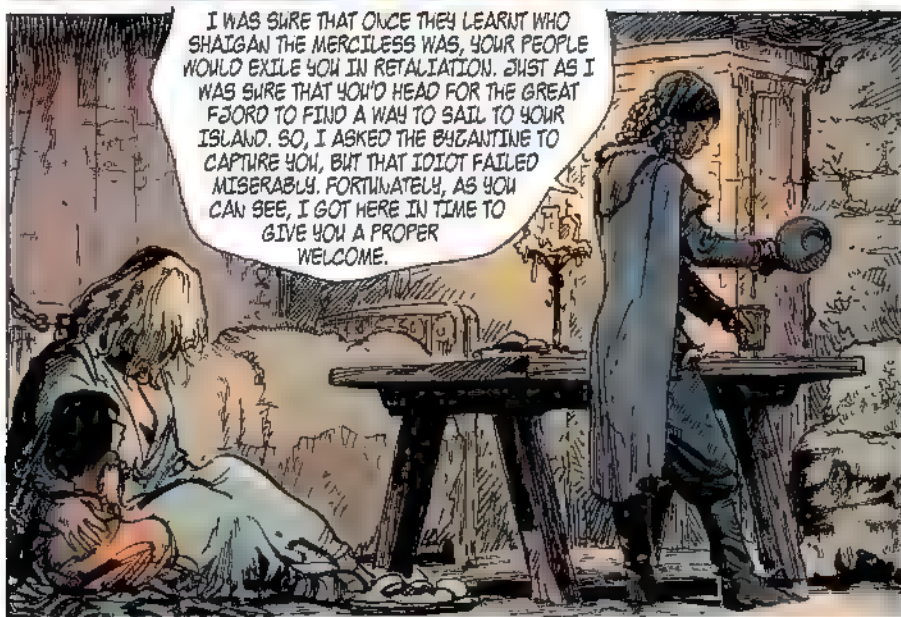
MAMA!...



BECAUSE OUR BRAVE HERO HAS
COMPLETELY LOST HIS MEMORY!
HE DOES WHAT I WANT HIM TO, AND
HE DOESN'T EVEN REMEMBER
THAT YOU
EXIST!



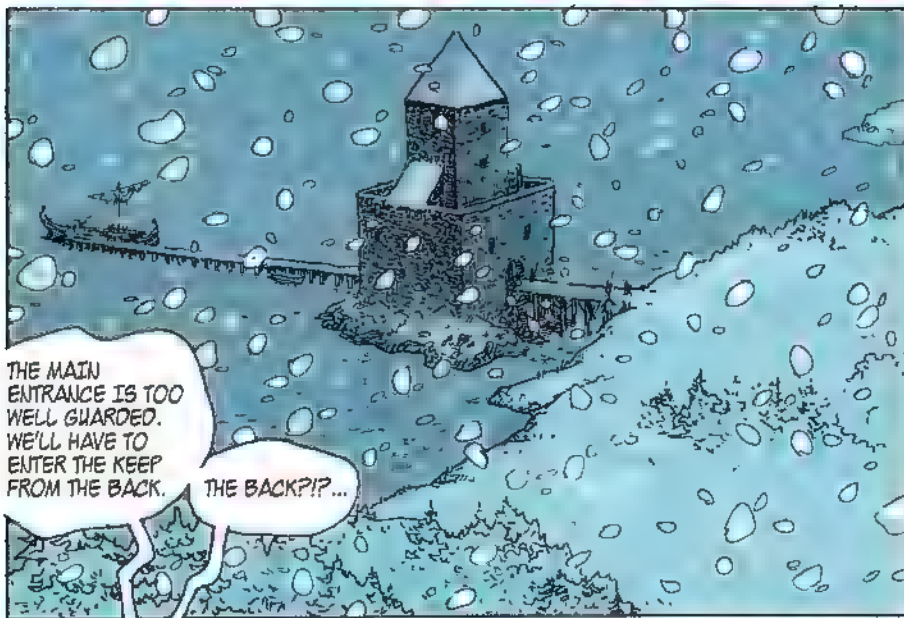
YOU WILL BE MY PERSONAL SLAVE,
AARICIA. I'LL HAVE YOUR HEAD SHAVED
SO EVERYONE CAN SEE THE MARK OF
YOUR ENSLAVEMENT. AND YOUR DAUGHTER'S
LIFE WILL GUARANTEE
YOUR OBEDIENCE.



I WAS SURE THAT ONCE THEY LEARN'T WHO
SHAIGAN THE MERCILESS WAS, YOUR PEOPLE
WOULD EXILE YOU IN RETALIATION. JUST AS I
WAS SURE THAT YOU'D HEAD FOR THE GREAT
FJORD TO FIND A WAY TO SAIL TO YOUR
ISLAND. SO, I ASKED THE BYZANTINE TO
CAPTURE YOU, BUT THAT IDIOT FAILED
MISERABLY. FORTUNATELY, AS YOU
CAN SEE, I GOT HERE IN TIME TO
GIVE YOU A PROPER
WELCOME.



YOU REALLY SHOULD EAT,
MY PRETTY. AT THIS POINT, THE
ONLY THING YOU HAVE LEFT
TO LOSE IS YOUR LIFE.

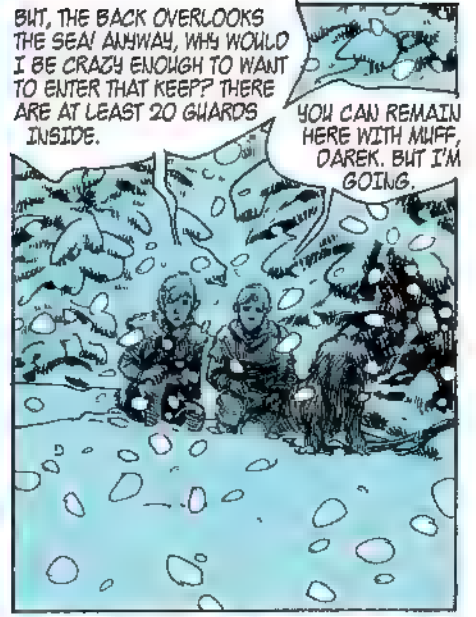


THE MAIN
ENTRANCE IS TOO
WELL GUARDED.
WE'LL HAVE TO
ENTER THE KEEP
FROM THE BACK.

THE BACK?!

BUT, THE BACK OVERLOOKS
THE SEA! ANYWAY, WHY WOULD
I BE CRAZY ENOUGH TO WANT
TO ENTER THAT KEEP? THERE
ARE AT LEAST 20 GUARDS
INSIDE.

YOU CAN REMAIN
HERE WITH MUFF,
DAREK. BUT I'M
GOING.



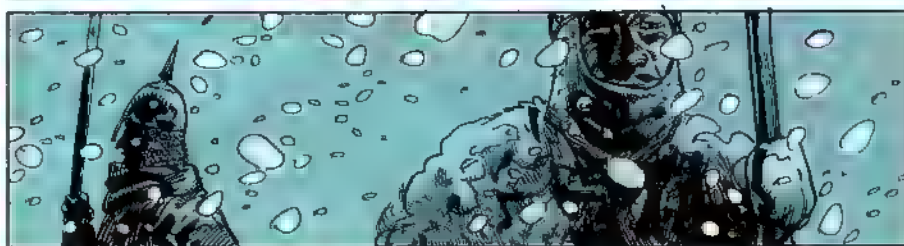
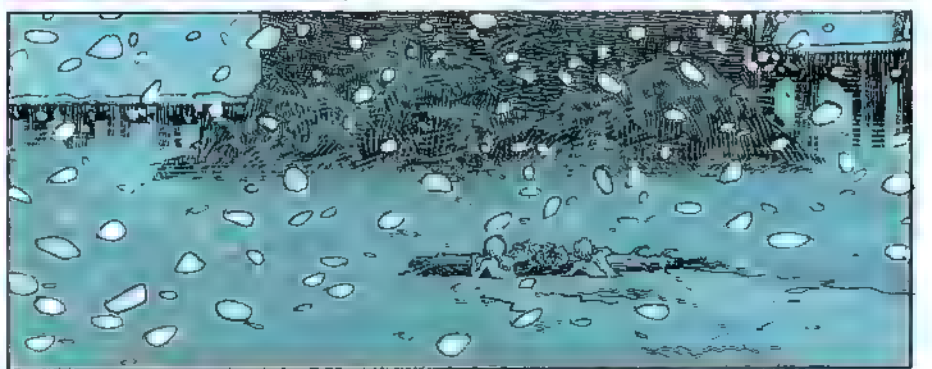
YOU STAY HERE, MUFF.
I'LL BE BACK SOON.

THIS KID'S INSANE...
WHY ARE YOU SO STUB-
BORN ABOUT THIS, JOLAN?
ALL WE'RE GOING TO GET
OUT OF IT IS THAT WE'LL
JOIN THE OTHERS AS
SLAVES!

BECAUSE
THORGAL WOULD
HAVE DONE
IT!

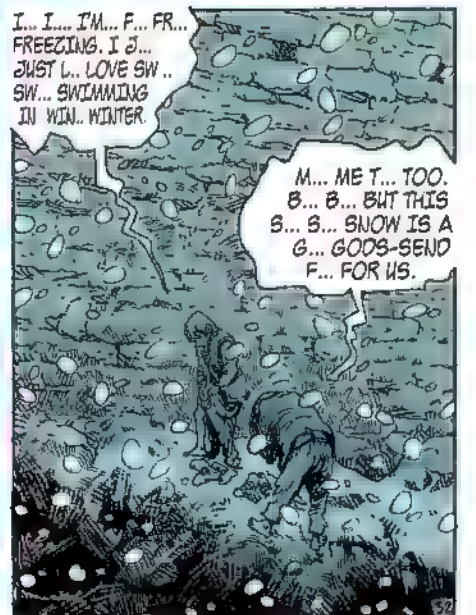
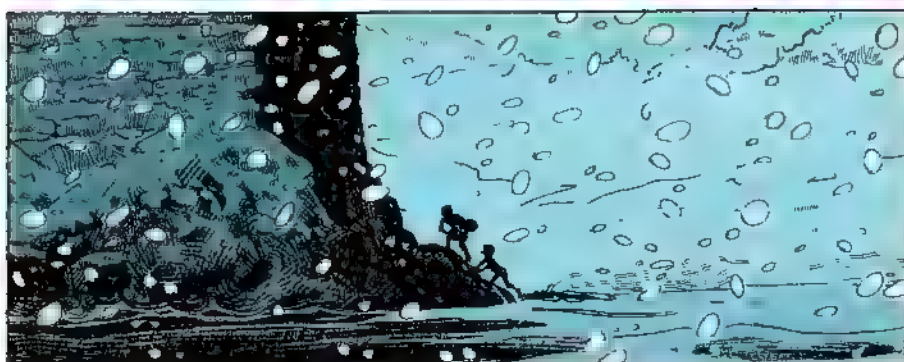
THORGAL?
WHO'S THAT?...

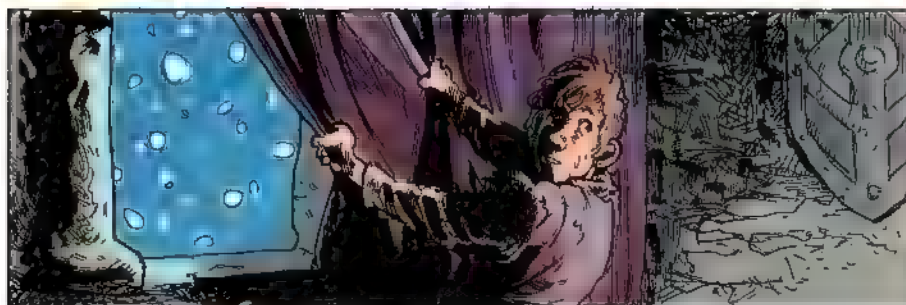
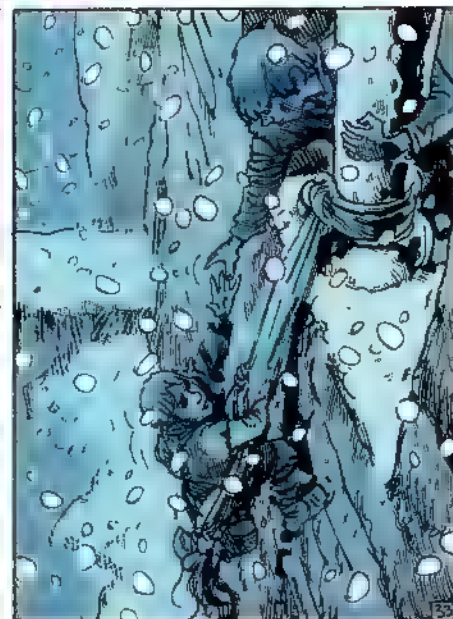
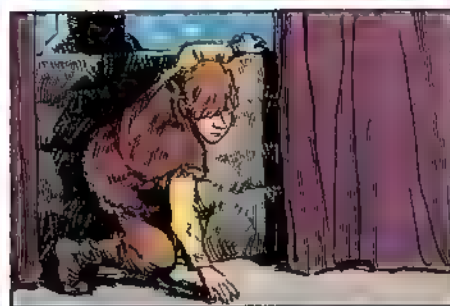
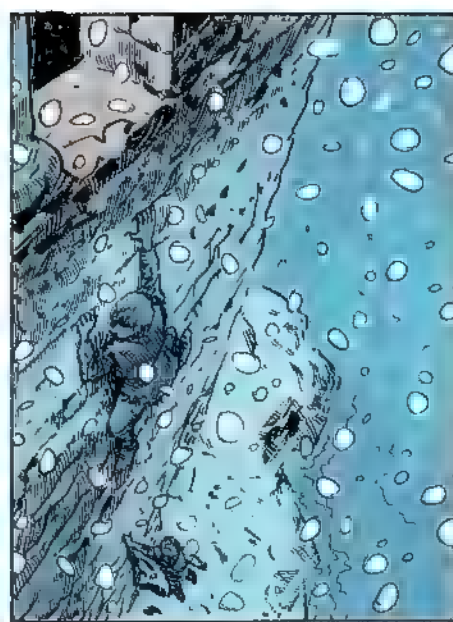
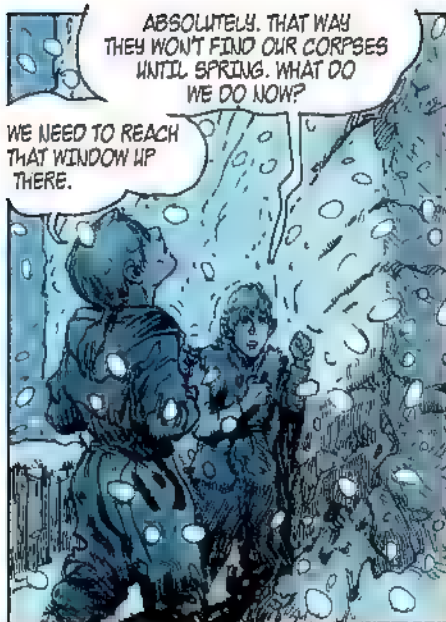
MY...
SOMEONE WHO
TAUGHT ME THAT YOU
SHOULD NEVER GIVE
UP. FIND YOURSELF A
LOG TO HANG ONTO
AND LET'S GO!



I... I... I'M... F... FR...
FREEZING. I J...
JUST L... LOVE SW...
SW... SWIMMING
IN WIN... WINTER.

M... ME T... TOO.
B... B... BUT THIS
S... S... SNOW IS A
G... GODS-SEND
F... FOR US.



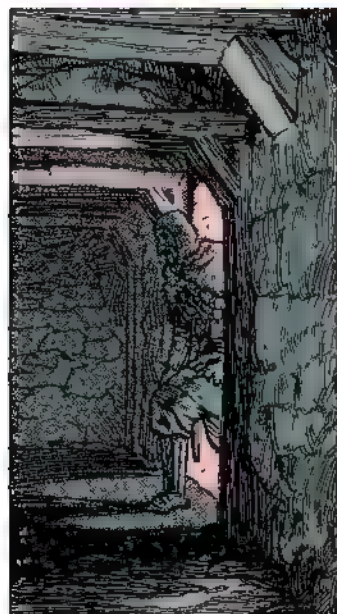


AHH... I WAS ALMOST DEAD. WHERE DO YOU THINK THE PRISONERS ARE KEPT?

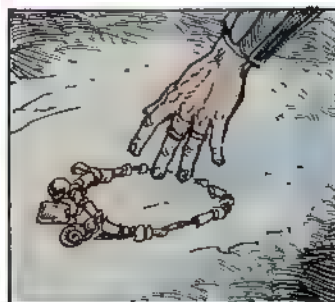
IN THE CELLARS, AS ALWAYS. THE BYZANTINE JUST SENT ARKADES DOWN THERE.

JOLAN, I... I'M SCARED.

SO AM I. THE BEST THING TO DO IN THAT CASE IS TO PRETEND YOU'RE NOT. PICK A WEAPON AND LET'S GO!

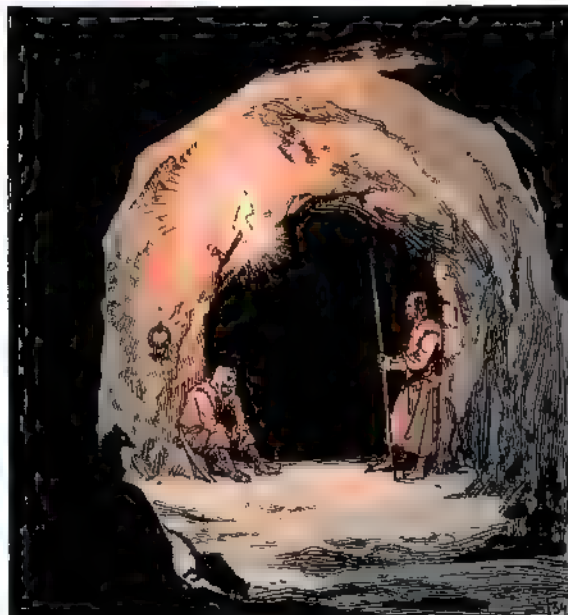


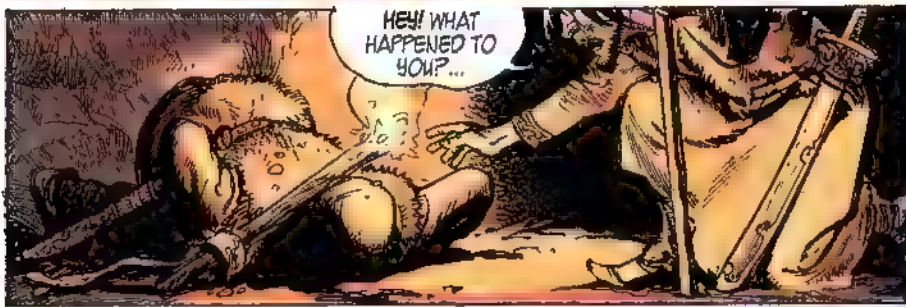
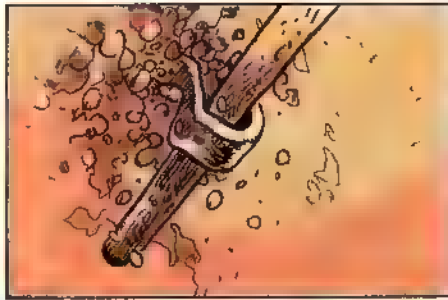
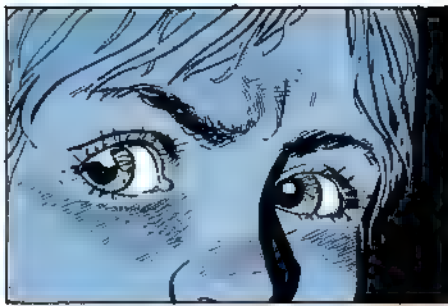
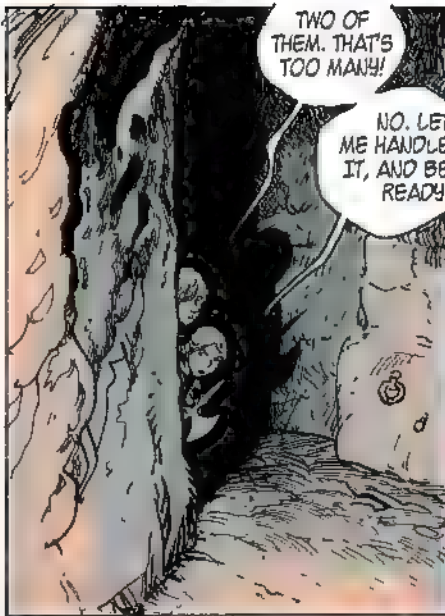
TINKLE

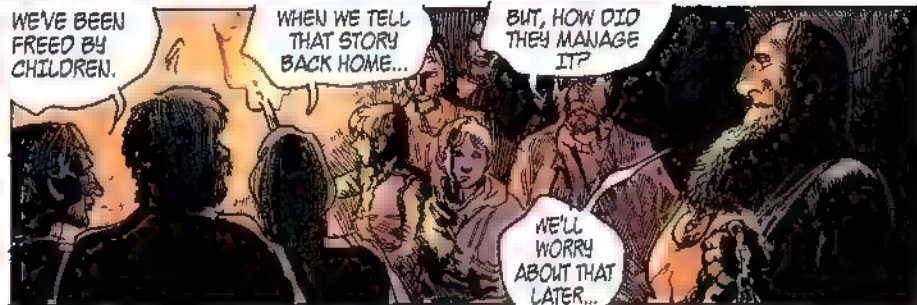


PHEWWW... THAT WAS STUPID! WE ALMOST GOT CAUGHT.

I'D FORGOTTEN I HAD THAT NECKLACE IN MY BELT. LET'S HEAD FURTHER DOWN BEFORE HE COMES BACK.









ANYONE WHO HAS THE STRENGTH FOR IT: GO HELP THE VIKINGS TAKE THE KEEP. IT'S THE PRICE OF YOUR FREEDOM.

WHERE ARE THE WOMEN AND CHILDREN KEPT?

IN THE LAST CELL, ALL THE WAY DOWN THIS CORRIDOR.

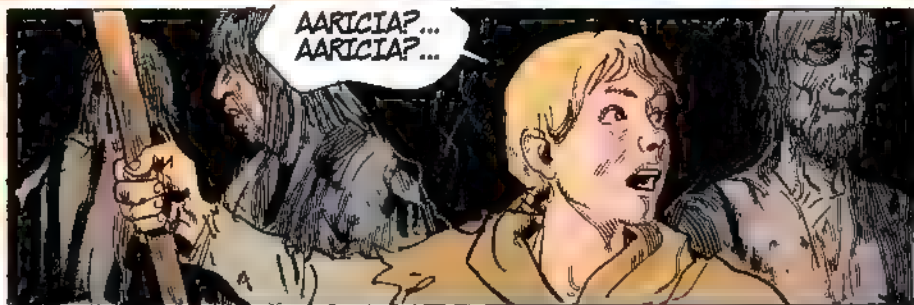


LEHLA?...



LEHLA! AT LAST!

DAREKI! OH, DAREKI! HOW DID YOU GET HERE?



AARICIA?... AARICIA?...



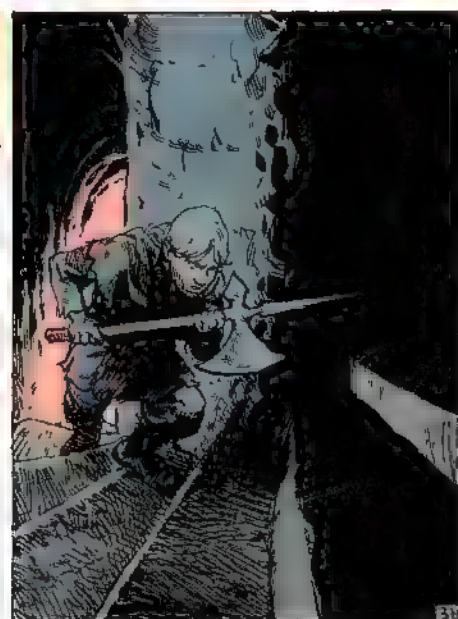
NO, MY BOY. NO NEW PRISONER HAS BEEN BROUGHT HERE IN OVER A WEEK.



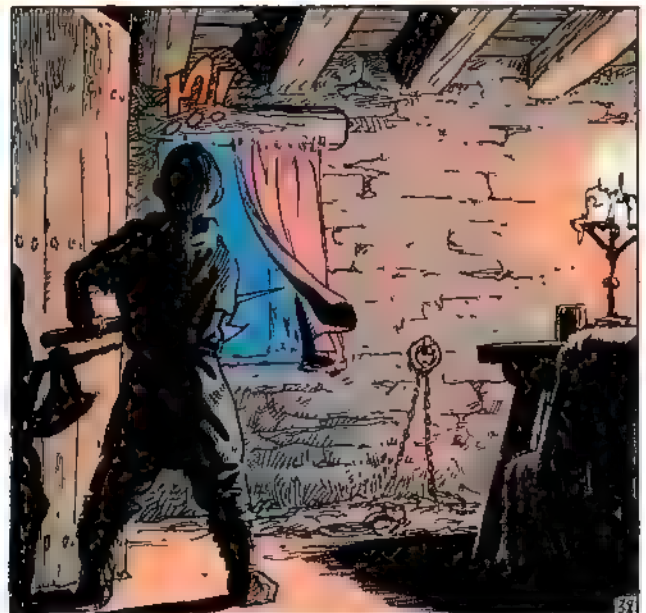
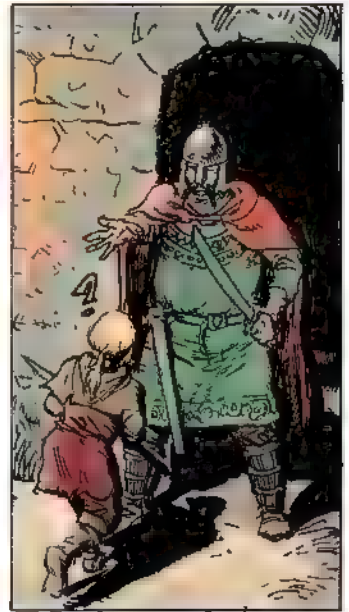
LEHLA, COME MEET THE ONE WHO HELPED ME FREE YOU. HE'S ONLY YOUR AGE, BUT HE ALREADY HAS THE COURAGE OF A WARRIOR...

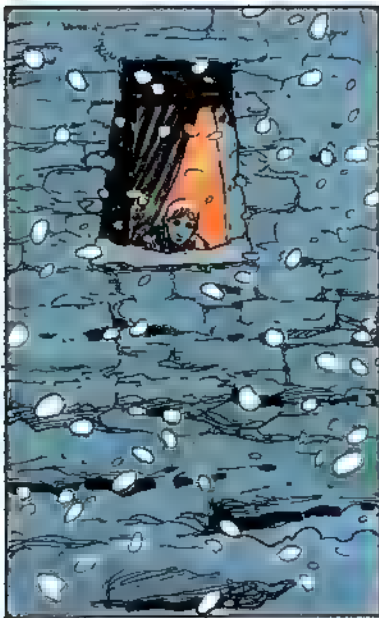


JOLAN?...

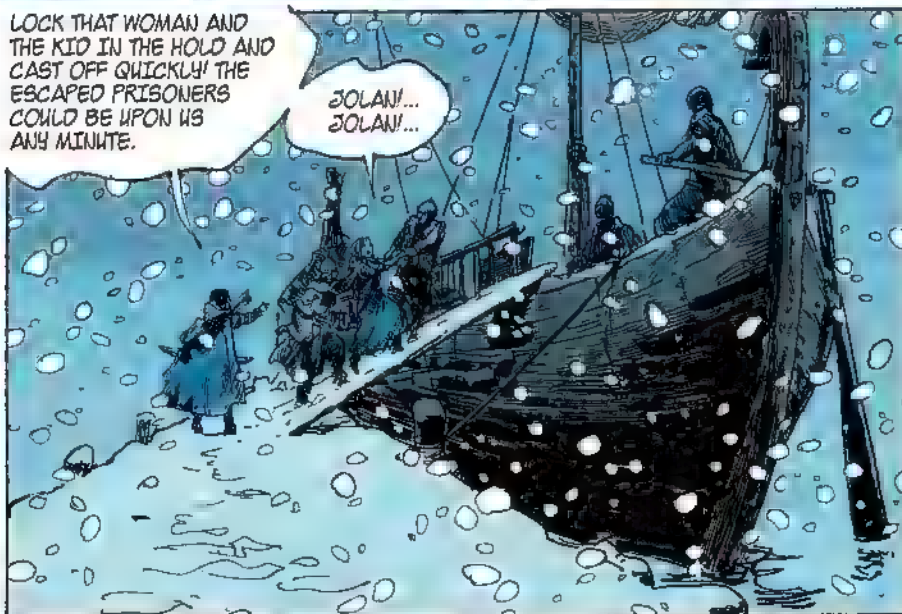


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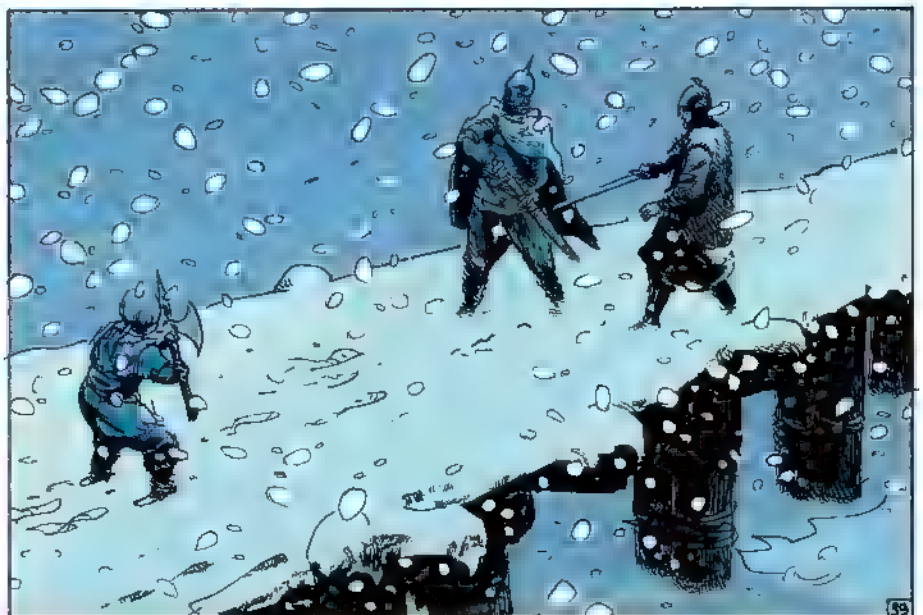


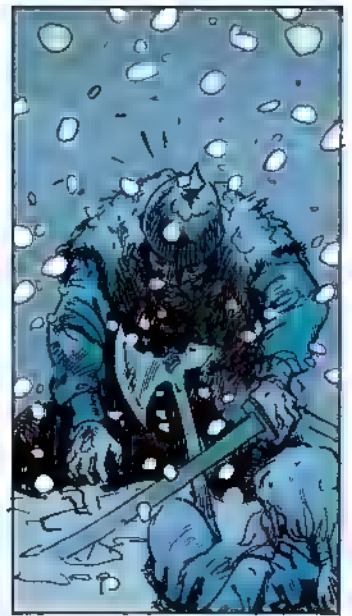
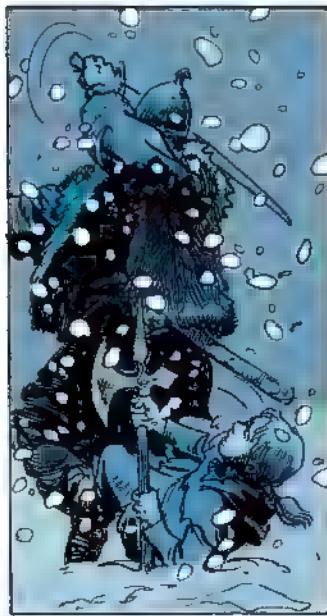


LOCK THAT WOMAN AND THE KID IN THE HOLD AND CAST OFF QUICKLY! THE ESCAPED PRISONERS COULD BE UPON US ANY MINUTE.



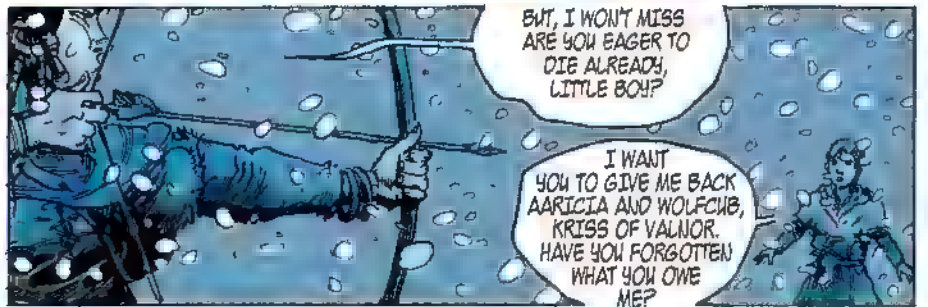
YOU TWO, STAY WITH ME. WE'RE GOING TO TAKE CARE OF THAT ACCURSED BRAT





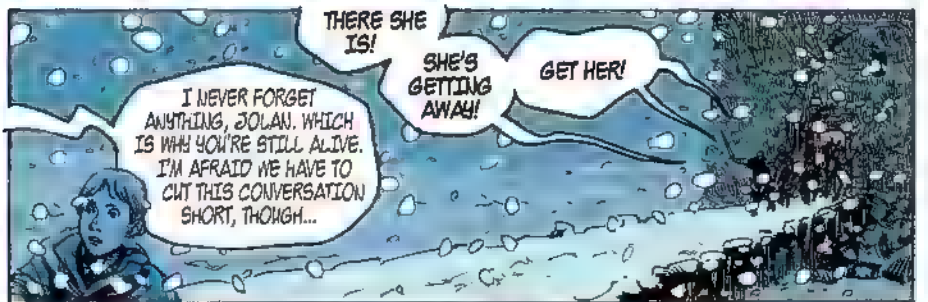
IMPRESSIVE, JOLAN. YOUR FATHER HIMSELF COULDN'T HAVE DONE BETTER

OH



BUT, I WON'T MISS ARE YOU EAGER TO DIE ALREADY, LITTLE BOY?

I WANT YOU TO GIVE ME BACK AARICIA AND WOLFCUB, KRISS OF VALNOR. HAVE YOU FORGOTTEN WHAT YOU OWE ME?



THERE SHE IS!

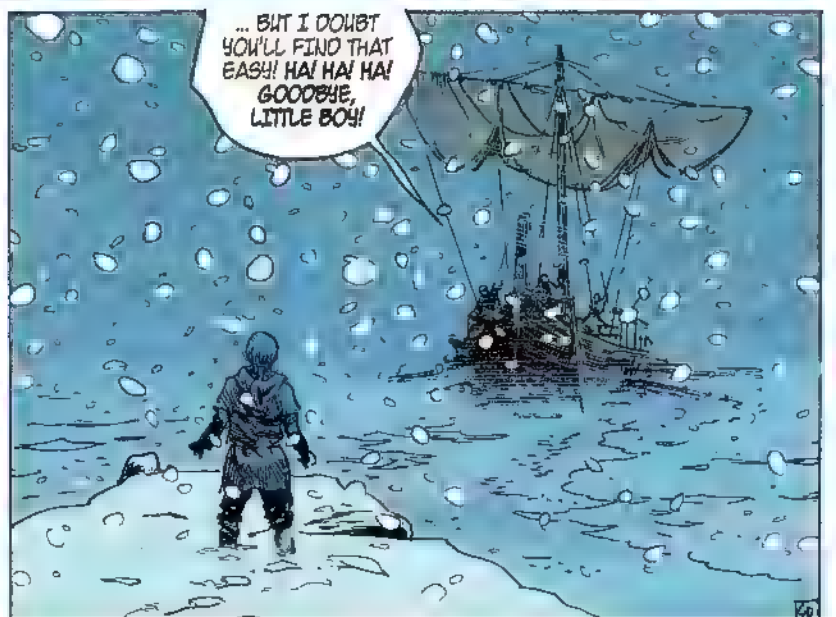
SHE'S GETTING AWAY!

GET HER!

I NEVER FORGET ANYTHING, JOLAN. WHICH IS WHY YOU'RE STILL ALIVE. I'M AFRAID WE HAVE TO CUT THIS CONVERSATION SHORT, THOUGH...



YOUR MOTHER AND SISTER BELONG TO ME NOW. JUST LIKE YOUR FATHER. IF YOU WANT TO SEE THEM AGAIN, YOU'LL HAVE TO COME GET THEM...



... BUT I DOUBT YOU'LL FIND THAT EASY! HA! HA! HA! GOODBYE, LITTLE BOY!



JOLAN, SON OF THORGAL, WE OWE YOU OUR FREEDOM. IT IS FITTING THAT YOU DECIDE WHAT SHOULD BECOME OF THAT STINKING TUB OF LARD.

GUT HIM LIKE A FISH!

DROWN HIM IN BOILING WATER!

MERCY...

HANG HIM BY HIS TOES!

ROAST HIM SLOWLY!

WHY KILL HIM? TAKE HIM BACK WITH YOU AS A SLAVE. LET HIM FEEL THE WEIGHT OF YOUR CHAINS THIS TIME AROUND.

HA! HA! MARVELLOUS IDEA! WE'LL MAKE HIM CLEAN THE VILLAGE PRIVY!

OH, THANK YOU! THANK YOU...

I THINK THE PRIVY WILL SUIT HIM VERY WELL.

WHAT WOULD I DO WITH IT? I'LL JUST TAKE WHAT I NEED TO BUY A BOAT AND SOME SUPPLIES.

THAT SLIMY RAT WAS SWIMMING IN GOLD. AT LEAST WE WON'T BE GOING HOME EMPTY-HANDED. OF COURSE, A FULL SHARE OF THIS IS YOURS.

A BOAT SMALL ENOUGH FOR ME TO HANDLE, BUT STURDY ENOUGH TO FACE THE OPEN SEA.

WHAT? ARE YOU NOT COMING BACK NORTH WITH US?

I MUST FIND MY MOTHER AND SISTER. BESIDES, THE NORTH IS NO LONGER MY HOME. WE WERE EXILED.

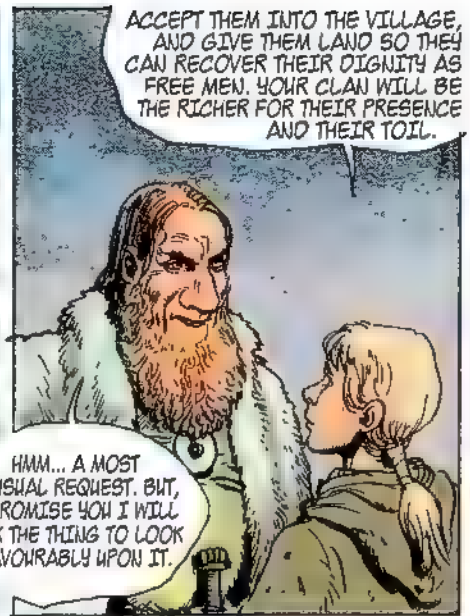
IT'S OBVIOUS THAT THORGAL IS THE VICTIM OF A SPELL CAST BY THAT BLACK-HAIRED WITCH. HE DOESN'T KNOW WHAT HE'S DOING ANYMORE. I WILL MAKE CERTAIN THE THING RESCINDS YOUR EXILE SENTENCE AND HAS ALL YOUR BELONGINGS RETURNED TO YOU I, GUNNAR, SO SWEAR!

ARE YOU CERTAIN YOU WILL NOT CHANGE YOUR MIND? WE OWE YOU A DEBT. HOW CAN WE REPAY IT?



BY TAKING THESE EXILES WITH YOU.

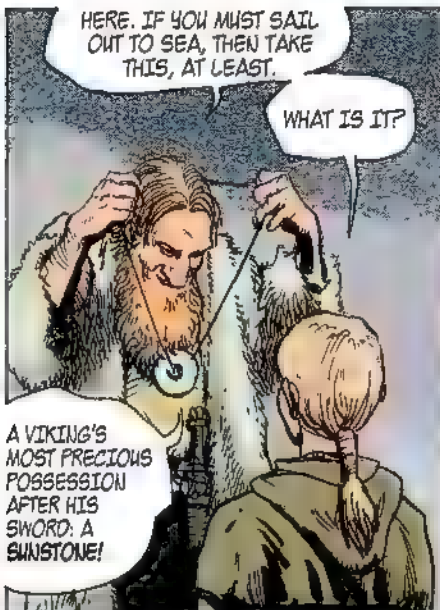
ACCEPT THEM INTO THE VILLAGE, AND GIVE THEM LAND SO THEY CAN RECOVER THEIR DIGNITY AS FREE MEN. YOUR CLAN WILL BE THE RICHER FOR THEIR PRESENCE AND THEIR TOIL.



HMM... A MOST UNUSUAL REQUEST. BUT, I PROMISE YOU I WILL ASK THE THING TO LOOK FAVOURABLY UPON IT.

HERE. IF YOU MUST SAIL OUT TO SEA, THEN TAKE THIS, AT LEAST.

WHAT IS IT?



A VIKING'S MOST PRECIOUS POSSESSION AFTER HIS SWORD: A SUNSTONE!

IF YOU HOLD IT AT RIGHT ANGLES TO THE SUN'S RAYS, EVEN WHEN THEY ARE HIDDEN BY CLOUDS OR FOG, IT CHANGES COLOUR INSTANTLY. THAT WAY, EVEN IN BAD WEATHER, YOU WILL ALWAYS BE ABLE TO SET YOUR ROUTE BY THE SUN*.

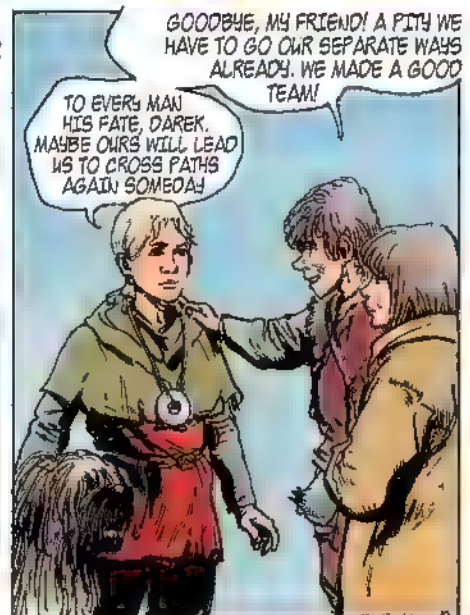


THANK YOU, GUNNAR. THIS IS A PRICELESS GIFT.

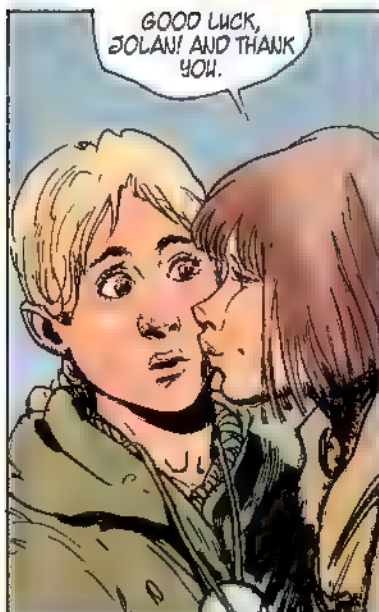
*CORDIERITE (A CYCLOSILICATE) AND ICELAND SPAR (A CALCITE) ARE TWO MINERALS FOUND IN SCANDINAVIA THAT HAVE THIS PECULIAR PROPERTY. IT HAS BEEN THEORISED THAT THE VIKINGS USED THEM TO SAIL THE OPEN SEAS

GOODBYE, MY FRIEND! A PITY WE HAVE TO GO OUR SEPARATE WAYS ALREADY. WE MADE A GOOD TEAM!

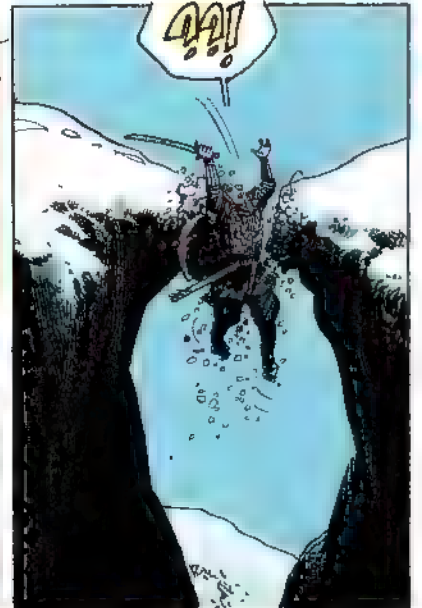
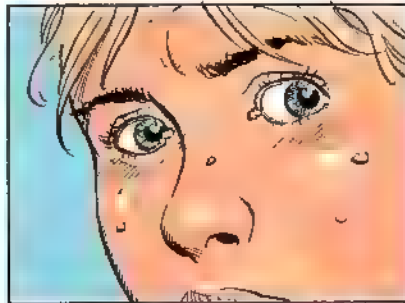
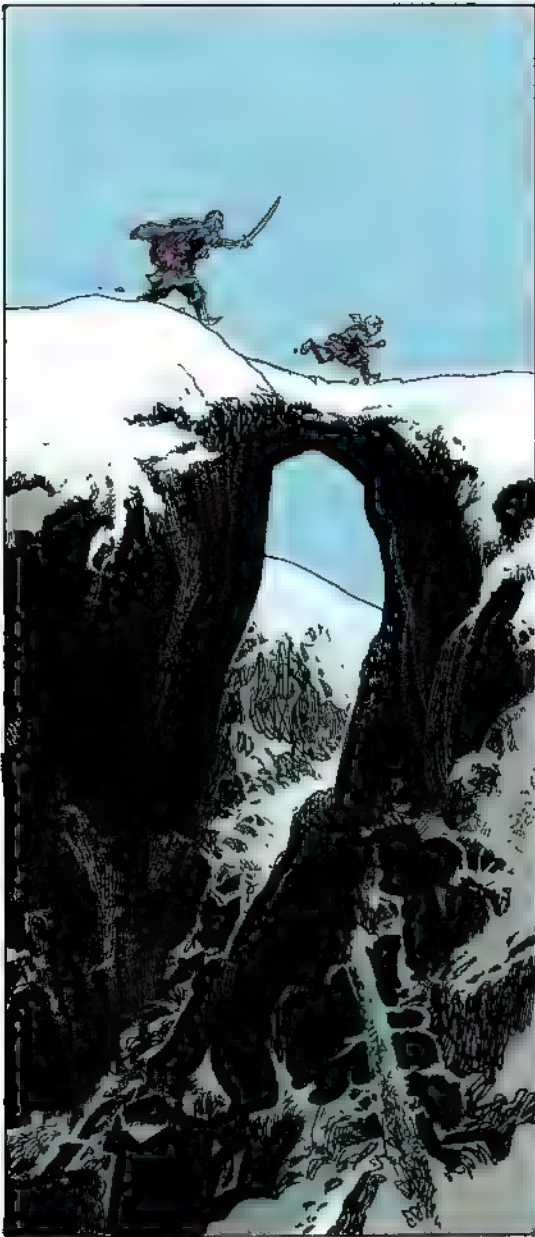
TO EVERY MAN HIS FATE, DAREK. MAYBE OURS WILL LEAD US TO CROSS PATHS AGAIN SOMEDAY



GOOD LUCK, JOLAN! AND THANK YOU.

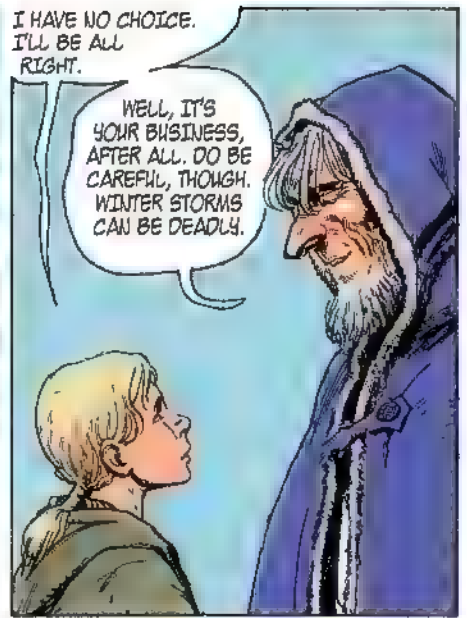






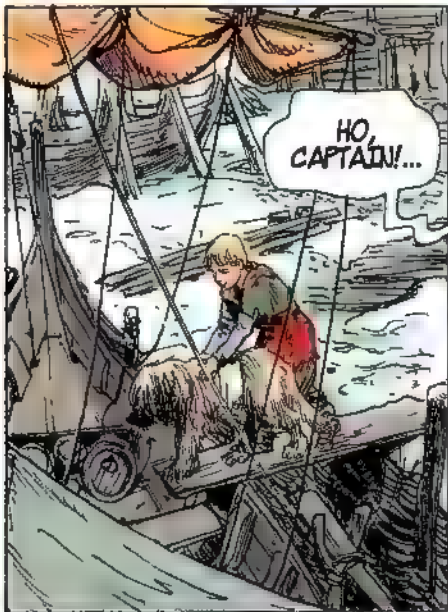


FOR THE GOLD YOU GAVE US, YOU HAVE THE BEST BOAT ON THE ENTIRE COAST, MY BOY. PLUS, WE PACKED ENOUGH FOOD AND WATER FOR TWO MONTHS. BUT, DO YOU REALLY INTEND TO SAIL ALONE?

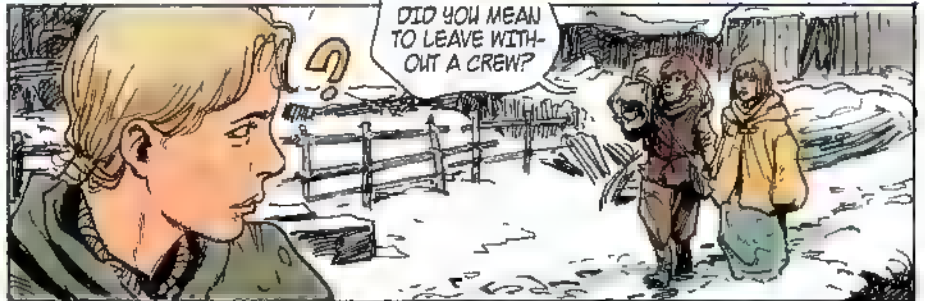


I HAVE NO CHOICE. I'LL BE ALL RIGHT.

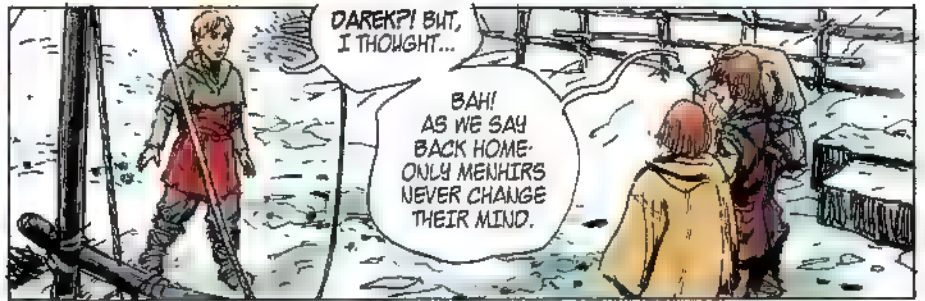
WELL, IT'S YOUR BUSINESS, AFTER ALL. DO BE CAREFUL, THOUGH. WINTER STORMS CAN BE DEADLY.



HO, CAPTAIN!...



DID YOU MEAN TO LEAVE WITHOUT A CREW?



DAREK? BUT, I THOUGHT...

BAH! AS WE SAY BACK HOME: ONLY MENHIRS NEVER CHANGE THEIR MIND.



IN THE END, THE THOUGHT OF WINDING UP STUCK IN A NORTHERN VILLAGE DIDN'T SOUND TOO EXCITING. WE HAVE NO FAMILY, NO COUNTRY, JOLAN. SO, WHY NOT GO WITH YOU?



IT'S JUST... ER...

WASN'T IT YOU WHO SAID THAT WE COULD BE STRONGER TOGETHER? I... BORROWED SOME CLOTHES FOR MY LITTLE SISTER, AND HERE WE ARE!



IF YOU'LL HAVE US, OF COURSE.



DO YOU KNOW WHERE YOUR MOTHER AND SISTER ARE?

THEY WERE TAKEN BY KRIS OF VALNOR, THE ACCOMPLICE OF SHAIGAN THE MERCILESS.



THE... THE PIRATE!?

THEY SAY HE SAILS ON A SHIP PAINTED WITH THE BLOOD OF HIS VICTIMS.

YOU'RE RIGHT: IT'S TOO DANGEROUS. LET ME GO ALONE.



MAYBE HE'LL LET US JOIN HIS CREW... I'VE ALWAYS DREAMT OF BEING A PIRATE. DO YOU KNOW WHERE WE CAN FIND THIS SHAIGAN?



SOMEWHERE TO THE SOUTHWEST. BUT, THE SEA IS WIDE...



GOOD! FINDING HIM WILL BE EVEN MORE REWARDING. TAKE THE HELM, CAPTAIN, AND TAKE US SOUTHWEST.



KORTAL & VAN HAMME THE END

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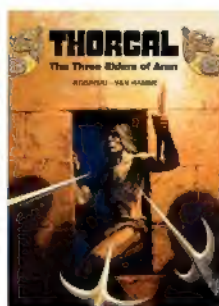
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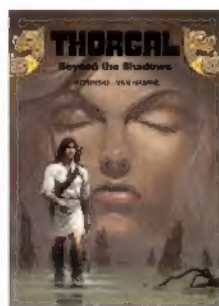
THE GODS HAVE PUT A MAN TO THE TEST



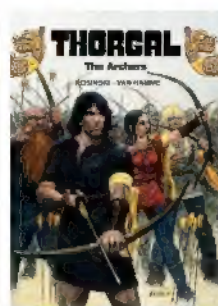
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2 The Three Elders of Aran
Incl. The Black Galley



3 Beyond the Shadows
Incl. The Fall of Brek Zarith



4 The Archers
Incl. Alinoe



5 The Land of Qa
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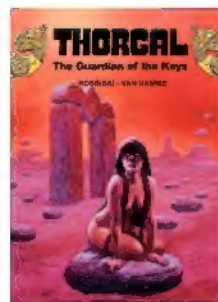
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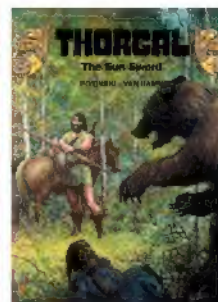
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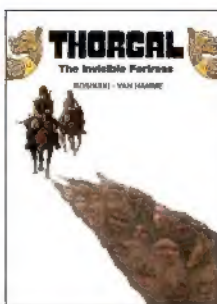
8 Wolf Cub



9 The Guardian of the Keys



10 The Sun Sword



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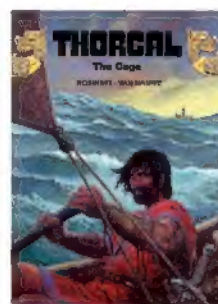
12 The Brand of the Exiles



13 Ogotai's Crown



14 Giants



15 The Cage



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